

[Rollcall Vote No. 47 Ex.]

YEAS—57

Baldwin	Hoeven	Reed
Bennet	Kaine	Rosen
Blumenthal	Kelly	Rounds
Booker	Kennedy	Schatz
Brown	King	Schumer
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Shaheen
Capito	Lujan	Sinema
Casey	Manchin	Smith
Collins	Markey	Stabenow
Coons	McConnell	Sullivan
Cortez Masto	Menendez	Tester
Cramer	Merkley	Thune
Daines	Moran	Tillis
Durbin	Murkowski	Warner
Gillibrand	Murphy	Warnock
Hassan	Murray	Warren
Heinrich	Ossoff	Welch
Hickenlooper	Padilla	Wyden
Hirono	Peters	Young

NAYS—35

Barrasso	Fischer	Paul
Blackburn	Graham	Ricketts
Boozman	Grassley	Risch
Braun	Hagerty	Romney
Britt	Hawley	Rubio
Budd	Hyde-Smith	Schmitt
Cassidy	Johnson	Scott (FL)
Cornyn	Lankford	Scott (SC)
Cotton	Lee	Tuberville
Crapo	Lummis	Vance
Cruz	Marshall	Wicker
Ernst	Mullin	

NOT VOTING—8

Cardin	Feinstein	Van Hollen
Carper	Fetterman	Whitehouse
Duckworth	Sanders	

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HICKENLOOPER). Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 61, Daniel I. Werfel, of the District of Columbia, to be Commissioner of Internal Revenue for the term expiring November 12, 2027.

Charles E. Schumer, Ron Wyden, Catherine Cortez Masto, Richard J. Durbin, Sheldon Whitehouse, Sherrod Brown, Margaret Wood Hassan, Raphael G. Warnock, Gary C. Peters, Jack Reed, Brian Schatz, Tina Smith, Ben Ray Lujan, Elizabeth Warren, Christopher A. Coons, Martin Heinrich, Christopher Murphy, Tammy Baldwin.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Daniel I. Werfel, of the District of Columbia, to be Commissioner of Internal Revenue for the term expiring November 12, 2027, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Maryland (Mr. CARDIN), the Senator from Delaware (Mr. CARPER), the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN), the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. FETTERMAN), and the Senator from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN) are necessarily absent.

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 51, nays 44, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 48 Ex.]

YEAS—51

Baldwin	Hickenlooper	Rosen
Bennet	Hirono	Sanders
Blumenthal	Kaine	Schatz
Booker	Kelly	Schumer
Brown	King	Shaheen
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Sinema
Casey	Lujan	Smith
Cassidy	Markey	Stabenow
Collins	Menendez	Tester
Coons	Merkley	Tillis
Cortez Masto	Murkowski	Warner
Duckworth	Murphy	Warnock
Durbin	Murray	Warren
Gillibrand	Ossoff	Welch
Grassley	Padilla	Whitehouse
Hassan	Peters	Wyden
Heinrich	Reed	Young

NAYS—44

Barrasso	Graham	Paul
Blackburn	Hagerty	Ricketts
Boozman	Hawley	Risch
Braun	Hoeven	Romney
Britt	Hyde-Smith	Rounds
Budd	Johnson	Rubio
Capito	Kennedy	Schmitt
Cornyn	Lankford	Scott (FL)
Cotton	Lee	Scott (SC)
Cramer	Lummis	Sullivan
Crapo	Manchin	Thune
Cruz	Marshall	Tuberville
Daines	McConnell	Vance
Ernst	Moran	Wicker
Fischer	Mullin	

NOT VOTING—5

Cardin	Feinstein	Van Hollen
Carper	Fetterman	

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 51, the nays are 44.

The motion is agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Daniel I. Werfel, of the District of Columbia, to be Commissioner of Internal Revenue for the term expiring November 12, 2027.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume legislative session.

The Senator from Tennessee.

MOTION TO DISCHARGE—H.J. RES.

26

Mr. HAGERTY. Mr. President, I move to discharge H.J. Res. 26 from the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

DISAPPROVING THE ACTION OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA COUNCIL IN APPROVING THE REVISED CRIMINAL CODE ACT OF 2022

Mr. HAGERTY. Mr. President, I move to proceed to H.J. Res. 26.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the joint resolution by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A joint resolution (H.J. Res. 26) disapproving the action of the District of Columbia Council in approving the Revised Criminal Code Act of 2022.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There are now up to 10 hours of debate equally divided between the proponents and opponents.

The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. HAGERTY. Mr. President, I am looking forward to a robust debate today.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. President, I am so glad the Senator from Tennessee is on the floor with H.J. Res. 26. I want to thank him for being insightful to know how important this is going to be to this Congress, to this city, to this country. So I thank the Senator for his steadfast work on this issue, and I look forward to supporting the resolution. We are also going to be talking a lot on the floor about this. So I thank him very much.

I rise today to talk about an issue that I actually came to the floor on 3 weeks ago and that is just very, very relevant, especially today, and that is out-of-control crime and a disregard for law and order that, unfortunately, President Biden has enabled in his own backyard.

Under the Biden administration's soft-on-crime agenda and rhetoric, Washington, DC, the capital of our beautiful country, has seen a 25-percent increase in crime, a 33-percent increase in homicides, a 121-percent increase in sexual abuse, and a 108-percent increase in motor vehicle theft—just this year, and we are just starting.

To make matters worse, in the midst of ongoing crime, the DC Council thought that now was an appropriate time to rewrite the Criminal Code. Instead of enforcing law and order in light of all of these statistics and supporting our police officers and making residents and visitors of the District feel safe, the DC Council found it fitting to lessen the punishment for violent criminal offenses—hard to believe, isn't it?—and embolden those who dare to break the law instead of heeding local calls for increased safety and policing from their residents.

It really doesn't get any more tone-deaf than that. Believe it or not, when the DC Council originally passed their irresponsible Criminal Code overall,

Mayor Muriel Bowser vetoed the bill—the Mayor of the city of DC—claiming that “this bill does not make us safer.”

She knows. She sees these statistics every single day and talks to her police officers every single day.

Well, Mayor Bowser, my colleagues and I could not agree with you more. It is obvious that the DC Council’s legislation is the complete opposite of what is needed to control the out-of-control crime.

Now, I am sure that you have seen that, in the face of an imminent bipartisan and bicameral rejection of their policy, the DC Council, then, has attempted to withdraw their Criminal Code revision legislation. That is a glaring—a glaring—admission by the council that they knew what they were doing is absolutely wrong.

But do you know what? It is simply too little, too late. Regardless of this unprecedented and potentially unlawful move, the Senate is poised to reject the DC Council’s sweeping and irresponsible “Revised Criminal Code of 2022” on a bipartisan basis. We certainly saw that in the House.

This vote, led by my colleague Senator HAGERTY of Tennessee, gives every Member of the U.S. Senate the chance to stand with law and order, the chance to stand with our law enforcement officers, the chance to stand with the people of our Nation’s Capital, whose calls for safety have fallen on deaf ears.

You think of all the visitors—springtime, Cherry Blossom Festival—this is the time everybody is coming to this beautiful, gorgeous city that we are lucky enough to serve in. Our constituents are here. Many of us have our families here. We are here. All the staff and folks that work in and around these buildings every day—in and out of their cars, in and out of restaurants we hope—getting that revival post-COVID that we see. And certainly we see many, many more visitors. Our residents and visitors are living with what could happen. What kind of crimes can they see?

There are a multitude of additional negative factors that impact the city when crime runs out of control and leaders are not held accountable. Often these issues go unseen, but they are just as impactful: factors like the education of our children, factors like the health of our residents—our DC residents—and the strength of the economy.

According to research led by the professors at the University of Illinois, at Syracuse, and NYU, students face declines in standardized test scores following exposure to violent crime. What is that doing to the children of DC? They have to face this every day.

The same decline was observed for students who attend schools that are perceived to be unsafe or schools that lack a sense of community. This study suggests that schools with stronger community bonds can shield students from the negative effects of neighborhood violence and directly show the

disadvantages impacting our young people who are coming of age in dangerous communities.

When it comes to health, researchers at the University of Pennsylvania have linked violent crime to negative health outcomes—it makes sense—finding that decreased violent crime in communities was significantly associated with a decrease in mortality rates from cardiovascular disease and coronary artery disease. Community areas that experienced a similar decline in crime also experienced smaller improvements in cardiovascular mortality.

The study also noted that the stress created by exposure to violent crime is tied with a lower intake of healthy foods and higher rates of substance abuse in a community. These aren’t things that I am making up. These are validated in a study from the University of Pennsylvania.

Further, the study noted that continued exposure to high rates of violent crime is associated with several additional negative health factors, like higher body mass index and even elevated blood pressure.

So now let’s look at the economics of this in crime. A study by the Urban Institute found that surges in violent crime, especially gun violence, reduced the growth of new retail and service businesses. You see that all over Washington. You see that all over Washington.

It further notes that increases in violent crime slow home value appreciation and can be associated with fewer jobs and lower home values. It makes sense. In Washington, DC, this means surging crime leads to fewer job opportunities, fewer businesses opening, and more businesses closing. I mean we just saw that at Union Station. I think the Starbucks pulled out there because of the crime issue.

The economic indicators of violent crimes are obvious. Walmart just announced it is closing all of its stores in Portland, OR, locations. The Walmart just over here in DC on H Street has announced that it was closing as well. The announcements come shortly after Walmart’s CEO warned that stores could close and prices could increase due to, specifically, rocketing retail crimes affecting stores across the Nation.

Each of these aspects pile onto the obvious humanitarian effects of violent crime: the destruction, loss, and sorrow—actually, I think if you are subject to a violent crime and you manage to live through it, it doesn’t just affect you that day; you carry it with you the rest of your life—and how each one of these offenses further rips apart the delicate fabric of our communities.

Residents of our States and cities will not stand for the continuing devastation. We saw crime play a major part in Chicago’s mayoral election just last week, and it was also a center of debate of the New York City elections in 2021.

So, Mr. President, I am glad that our Nation’s Capital and our complex are

once again open to the public. It is so great to see the halls filled and the young people coming back, and I have enjoyed welcoming many West Virginians to Washington today and every day to talk about the issues they care about. It is important. Questions have also been raised by many residents about the safety of our streets here in Washington, DC.

So today’s vote to reject the DC Council’s Revised Criminal Code Act of 2022 puts every Member on record. As some of my Republican colleagues highlighted last night and continue to highlight today, we intend to stand on the right side of this issue, and we will continue to heed the calls for increased safety that local officials in Washington are attempting to ignore or reshape and protect the communities that we serve.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi

Mrs. HYDE-SMITH. Mr. President, I rise to express my support also for the resolution of disapproval of the new soft-on-crime law approved by the District of Columbia City Council. The resolution represents my chance to say: Enough is enough.

Today, Americans feel increasingly unsafe. It is not hard to understand why, since it has become impossible to disregard or dismiss the unraveling of law and order across the country over the past few years.

Whether it is the lack of law enforcement on the border, anti-police rhetoric, or weakened punishments for the violent crimes, Americans know the shift away from law and order, right and wrong, is tearing all the fabric of their communities. Crime is at a 25-year high across the entire country.

Unfortunately, my home State of Mississippi is not immune from this trend. Our capital, Jackson, has recorded more than 100 homicides for 3 consecutive years.

It is the same song, different verse in our Nation’s very own Capital, where overall crime is up 25 percent since last year. In fact, Washington, DC’s murder rate is 34 percent higher today than this time last year. Auto thefts are up 110 percent in this city.

What has the response been from the Democratic leadership? Well, it certainly has not made public safety a priority. There is a good reason the Senate is considering a resolution of disapproval against the DC Council’s Revised Criminal Code Act of 2022. With DC’s growing record of lawlessness, the city council voted to eliminate mandatory minimum sentences and reduce penalties for crimes like robbery, carjacking, home invasion, burglary, and more. These are violent crimes that leave victims traumatized, injured, or worse—dead.

So why is the instinct to protect the criminal—to signal that the penalties for violating the law are being eased?

This law will put residents, constituents, tourists, Federal workers, and

elected officials directly in harm's way. Rather than holding them accountable for their own actions, the DC Council would prefer to let these violent criminals go back to the streets and commit the same violent crimes. Is it any wonder Washington, DC, has a police recruitment and retention problem?

At the same time, those responsible for enforcing our justice system seem more interested in carrying out "justice" based on politics. The Biden administration's Justice Department, for example, appears to be laser-focused on parents at local school board meetings, pro-life Americans exercising their right to protest, and spying on Catholic Americans, while taking a nothing-to-see-here approach to threats of violence against sitting Justices at the Supreme Court or attacks on pregnancy centers. If things continue this way, Americans will start to wonder if their safety and protection is determined by their political affiliation.

Mr. President, public safety should not be a political issue. It is not virtue signaling to lessen punishments for violent criminals; it is just dangerous. It is not progressive to pretend the breakdown in border security and subsequent flood of fentanyl aren't contributing to the surges in the crime and death; it is nonsensical.

Americans who live in the greatest Nation in the world at the very least deserve to feel safe. We deserve to live in a country of law and order. Yes, it is time to say "enough is enough" to the radical policies embraced by the Democratic Party that have only resulted in more crime, more fear and more tragedies.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. TILLIS. Mr. President, I rise today to voice my support for the resolution we are talking about on public safety in Washington, DC.

The DC Revised Criminal Code Act is another example of how the far left is so out of touch that they want to reduce penalties for violent crime in DC while residents, Federal employees, Members of Congress, our visiting constituents, and even our visiting diplomats are facing greater risk.

There are a number of concerns I have with the crime bill that the DC Council passed over the objections of the DC Mayor, many of which have already been discussed at length by my colleagues.

But one of the most puzzling to me is why you would ever reduce penalties for carjacking. DC city officials saw from 2019 to 2020, the number of carjackings in DC more than doubled from 152 to 360. They are not following trends either. In 2021, it went up to 425; and in 2022, it went up to 485. Despite the fact that carjackings have more than tripled in the last 4 years, far-left radicals on the DC City Council thought now was the time to reduce penalties for carjacking. That is one of

only several examples we can go to that my colleagues have talked about.

That tells me that the DC City Council is blind to crime happening right in front of them—right outside their front door—or that the carjacking industry has some really good lobbyists here in Washington.

Now, to make it worse, only a month ago, President Biden's Office of Management and Budget issued a statement opposing this resolution and in support of letting radical DC activists on the council let the bill go into effect. Not only that, but at least on two occasions, President Biden's U.S. attorney in Washington, DC, expressed support for letting the radical proposal proceed, even while raising concerns about how extreme the policies were.

I am appealing directly to President Biden. First, I want to thank him for agreeing to sign this resolution when we send it to the President's desk after a successful vote. I am also asking the President to prove his commitment to public safety by working with my colleagues and me on commonsense, bipartisan proposals that keep communities safe. I think that I have a track record of bipartisanship here that the President should take as a good-faith offer. We need to get to work.

One of the bills that I would like to get support for is a bill that I filed last Congress—and I am going to file again—called the Protect and Serve Act. We need to get it into law because it creates penalties for those who assault or kill a police officer, the brave men and women in law enforcement.

We need to show our commitment to law enforcement and to law and order in this country, and I believe the Protect and Serve Act will send a clear signal to friends and foes alike that we care about law enforcement. We need the thousands of law enforcement jobs that are not being filled today because law enforcement feels like at least policymakers—I don't believe the American people—are working against them.

But now I also want to talk a little bit about how crime is getting worse. I consider the Presiding Officer a friend.

You are on the other side of the aisle, but I see us having a lot in common. But, Mr. President, I have to tell you, for those of you watching this speech—my mother and maybe a few others—I think it is important to understand how campaign finance works here.

Both the Republicans and Democrats have national organizations that work on supporting candidates. I think that is fine. Here is what I don't think is fine. It is actually something—I just made sure the subpage is still up. It is. I can't lift up my phone and show you all because it is a violation of Senate rules. If you Google "ActBlue" and "all cops are bastards," you will go to a fundraising web page on ActBlue—the very same engine that my Democratic colleagues use for fundraising.

I know most of my Democratic colleagues do not embrace that as anything that they would support or con-

tribute to, but it is out there. If you go to their website, you are going to see the 13.12-mile run. They go on to explain why they specifically picked that distance—because "1-3-1-2" translates into "A-C-A-B." Do you know what "A-C-A-B" translates into? "All cops are bastards"—all.

We know that in any area where you have tens of thousands of people, not all of them are angels, but all of them? Our law enforcement folks here on Capitol Hill—all of them? The ones who protected us on January 6? They are raising money to convince people that all cops are bastards—actblue.com.

It will be interesting to see if anybody on the city council in DC has actually provided a contribution.

More recently, I think that this sort of rhetoric is at least in part what occurred in Atlanta just about a week ago, where violent activists attacked a construction site for Atlanta's public safety training. At least 23 of the agitators were arrested and charged with domestic terrorism after conducting what the Atlanta Police Department is calling "a coordinated attack on construction equipment and police officers."

Here is what is ironic about that. I have been to several police officer training facilities, and do you know what they train there? They train them to protect themselves and protect innocent victims, but they also train them how to deescalate. They train them how to take a dangerous situation and let someone who may be a criminal be able to go and face justice but not die at a crime scene. They are teaching police officers to be better.

In Atlanta, because of this sort of rhetoric, they are attacking the very people we all want to see at our doorstep when we dial 9-1-1. The violent activists destroyed multiple pieces of construction equipment. Thankfully, no police officers were harmed. These are not your run-of-the-mill "defund the police" activists; these are radicals like the radicals who are raising money on it, who are willing to use violence to achieve their ends of abolishing the police.

This DC crime bill that we are going to overturn today is another step in that direction—enabling and encouraging unsafe communities at the expense of the vast majority of police officers and citizens who simply want to live in peace.

It is long past time for the Federal government to say enough is enough when it comes to crime in this country.

I was proud to join President Trump in supporting the First Step Act, by the way. If you want to talk to me about criminal justice reform, if you want to talk to me about reducing sentences for nonviolent offenders, if you want to talk to me about early release of those who look like they have an opportunity to reform and get back to being active members of society, count me in. Do you know why? Because I have already done it. I have done it at

the State level, and I have done it up here. That is smart criminal justice policy. This is dangerous.

I want to thank my friend and colleague from a onetime home of mine in Tennessee for moving this resolution.

You should be congratulated. You have done great work, and I think you have opened the eyes of several Members on the other side of the aisle here to why this is a sound bill. I am glad to see you carrying it all the way to the President's desk, and it will be successful.

Thank you, Senator HAGERTY.

But let's not end with this vote. Go onto that website and see what we are up against. Talk to your local law enforcement and talk about how many unfilled positions there are and how morale is low, and do your part to thank every man and woman in uniform for their service.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. CORTEZ MASTO). The Republican whip.

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I, too, want to acknowledge the great work of the Senator from Tennessee, Senator HAGERTY, on this matter on which we will be voting later this afternoon. It has to do with the issue of DC crime.

I think he has touched a nerve in a way that I think is going to lead to a very big bipartisan outcome on this because it is a recognition that the issue he addresses with this resolution is one that the American people, I think, feel deeply about; one that is affecting our cities, both large and small, across this country; and one on which I think this United States Senate needs to be heard.

The last weekend in February, eight men were fatally shot in Washington, DC—eight men in a single weekend. It was a tragic illustration of the current crime situation in our Nation's Capital. Homicides in Washington, DC, which had already reached disturbing heights in 2021 and 2022, are up 33 percent so far this year compared to this point a year ago. We are just 67 days into 2023, but so far this year, there have been 101 carjackings—that is a motor vehicle theft where the victim is actually present—66 percent of those involving guns. There have been a staggering 1,258 motor vehicle thefts to date this year—1,258. That is an average of roughly 19 motor vehicle thefts every single day—19 thefts every day.

In the face of the crime surge DC has been experiencing for a while now, the DC City Council recently decided to pass legislation weakening penalties for a number of crimes. The bill the council passed late last year would reduce the maximum penalty for crimes like carjacking, robbery, and firearm offenses; remove mandatory minimum sentences for all crimes except first-degree murder; clog up the court system by substantially expanding access to trial by jury to individuals charged with misdemeanors; and more.

Later today, we will be taking up legislation here in the U.S. Senate to

block the bill. Congress, of course, has the legal authority to block DC ordinances thanks to Federal legislation rooted in the Constitution which gives Congress legislative jurisdiction over the seat of the U.S. Government—namely, Washington, DC.

It looks like today's vote will receive strong support from both parties. That certainly was not looking like it would have been the case a week ago. Last month, the Biden administration issued a statement opposing the move to block DC's crime bill. When the House took up the measure, 82 percent of House Democrats voted against blocking the DC bill. But last week, the President changed his tune. He announced that he would not veto the attempt to block the DC bill. Since then, Senate Democrats have been lining up to announce they will vote to block DC's measure.

I am pleased Democrats have recognized that weakening criminal penalties is not the way to address DC's crime surge. Blocking DC's crime bill will be a victory for common sense and for the people of DC, who deserve a safe city in which to live.

While I am pleased at the expected outcome of today's vote, I remain deeply concerned about how we got here in the first place. How have we gotten to the point where some people think that an appropriate response to a surge in crime is to weaken criminal penalties, to a point where ideology has overtaken common sense, to the detriment of public safety? Part of the answer lies in the deeply troubling surge in anti-law enforcement rhetoric over the past few years and the accommodation of it by members of the Democratic Party.

There has been talk of defunding our most essential public servants—the police; characterization of our justice system as fundamentally unjust; an attitude that the answer to crime is not to try to stop it from taking place but to stop punishing criminals. The Democratic Party has been deeply complicit in this. One leading Democrat Senator and Democrat Presidential candidate had this to say a few years ago:

Let's just start with the hard truth about our criminal justice system. It's racist. It is. And when I say our system, I mean all the way. I mean front to back.

That from a leading Democrat Senator and Democrat Presidential candidate.

She is not the only prominent Democrat who has spoken that way. Many other Democrats, of course, have not been that explicit, but they have tried to have it both ways—attempting to say they support the police on one hand, while also accommodating the radical elements of their party who want to tear down our justice system and demonize not just a few bad police officers but a whole community of public servants who put their lives on the line for us every single day.

President Biden is a striking example of this. As his about-face on the DC crime bill makes clear, he is eager to

portray himself as a supporter of law and order, especially, I assume, given that polling has made it clear Americans are deeply concerned about crime. But at the same time that he is trying to portray himself as anti-crime, he is nominating individuals to serve in his administration who have engaged in anti-police rhetoric.

The President can't have it both ways, and his attempt and Democrats' attempt to do so has helped a troubling anti-law enforcement, anti-justice system narrative to gain hold in our communities.

One thing I always think about when I hear anti-law enforcement rhetoric is how little attention is paid to the victim. People speak negatively about criminal penalties or overpolicing, but they don't talk about the victims of violent crimes and what it is like to live in a place where you literally fear for your safety.

As DC's Mayor recently said:

We have to think about victims of crime as much as we think about perpetrators.

I would argue, more than we think about perpetrators.

But, too often, the focus of discussions is almost entirely on perpetrators, with little attention paid to the victims of crime or the consequences of tolerating criminal activity.

As the DC police chief recently said of DC's bill:

Where's the victim in all of this? Who does this actually help? Is the victim being helped or is it the person who victimizes? I don't think victims win in that space. And again, that is a nonstarter for me.

That from the DC police chief, speaking of the very bill we are going to block today.

Bills like the DC City Council's bill should be a nonstarter for everyone. Democratic politicians need to stop accommodating the common ideology that thinks reducing criminal penalties is an appropriate response to crime.

I am thankful, as I said, for the Senator from Tennessee's leadership and that later today we are going to vote to block legislation that would endanger DC residents and visitors to our Nation's Capital. I hope—I sincerely hope—this bill will mark a return to common sense as we work to battle crime in DC and around the country.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. HAGERTY. Madam President, I just want to convey my thanks and deep respect to our Republican whip for his thoughtful comments and my other colleagues who have been here today to speak on this serious matter. Thank you, all.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. HOEVEN. Madam President, I join my colleagues today to speak regarding the rising crime rate in our country. Crimes, specifically violent crimes, are exploding at troubling rates nationwide. Crimes are at a 25-year high across the country.

Connected to the rise in crime is the Biden administration's open border policy, which is resulting in increased drug and human trafficking. At the same time, radical proposals to "defund the police" are the exact opposite of what we should be doing right now, which is supporting our men and women in law enforcement. We need to do that by giving them the resources, the tools, and training needed to do their job and protect our communities.

We must strive to protect our communities, enforce our laws, support our men and women in blue, and keep criminals off the street. Our Nation's Capital is, unfortunately, a prime example of the problems that we are having with crime right now in our cities. Crime is up 25 percent since March of 2022. In that same timeframe, homicides are up 30 percent and motor vehicle theft is up 110 percent.

As the center of our government and the symbol of our country, this is simply unacceptable. And instead of working to protect our Nation's Capital and all our constituents who visit here—and there are many of them here today—the DC Council has voted to ease violent crime penalties.

Last fall, the DC Council passed the Revised Criminal Code Act, which greatly weakens the criminal justice system here in the District of Columbia. This bill is so problematic that the Mayor of DC vetoed the bill, stating that "it does not make us safe."

DC's law enforcement community is also deeply alarmed by the bill, raising concerns of overwhelming the court system and exploding the already-high violent crime rate here in the District of Columbia.

We must get serious about protecting safety and addressing the nationwide rise in crime by supporting our law enforcement and ensuring they have the resources and training they need to protect our communities.

That is why I helped to introduce the Resolution of Disapproval to prevent such a reckless rewrite of the DC Criminal Code from taking effect. And I thank the good Senator from Tennessee for taking the lead in this very, very important matter.

As legislators, we should focus on keeping criminals off our streets, instead of attempting to weaken sentences for violent crimes and criminals. Let's get back to the basics and support our law enforcement and ensure they have the tools they need to keep our communities safe.

Again, we have people visiting here from all over the country. This isn't just the District of Columbia where people live like another city. This is our Nation's Capital. People come here from all over the country. They should feel safe. They should feel safe in our Nation's Capital.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CRUZ. Madam President, crime is surging across this Nation. Murder

rates have risen over the last 3 years, carjackings are rising, robberies are rising.

Today, I want to discuss the resolution disapproving of the DC City Council's decision to eliminate mandatory minimums and to reduce maximum sentences for violent crimes, including robbery, carjacking, and burglary.

The DC City Council made this decision to lower penalties late last year, despite the fact that crime has been skyrocketing in this city. In the past 12 months, overall crime is up 25 percent in DC. Car theft has increased 110 percent in DC. And homicides have increased 30 percent.

Who, in their right mind, looks to those rising crime rates and says the answer is to lower the penalties for violent crime?

DC's spike in crime is hardly confined to the last 12 months. In 2021, the number of murders in DC was the highest it has been since 2003. The Mayor of DC, a Democrat, vetoed the city council's decision to rewrite the Criminal Code, saying:

Any time there is a policy that reduces penalties, I think it sends the wrong message.

Unfortunately, the Democrats on the city council in DC overrode her veto.

Time and time again, we have seen Democrats in major cities reducing penalties for crime; and we have seen, as a result, crime spiking. We have seen this in San Francisco. We have seen this in Los Angeles. We have seen this in Portland. We have seen this in Boston. We have seen this in Philadelphia. We have seen this in New York. We have seen this in St. Louis. We have seen this in Chicago.

Crime is spiking in DC, and it is incredibly harmful to the men and women and children who live in DC to be lowering the penalties for violent crime. That is why I am proud to support the resolution to disapprove of the DC City Council's decision. And I thank my friend from Tennessee for his leadership in bringing this resolution.

This has already passed the House. And I believe it will pass the Senate as well. And, despite being soft on crime his entire Presidency, President Biden has said he will sign it if it passes the Senate. Now that is remarkable given Biden's record on crime. That is remarkable given that Biden has nominated not one, not two, but three of the leading advocates of abolishing the police to senior positions in the Department of Justice.

I am sorry to say that every Democrat in this Chamber voted to confirm not one, not two, but all three of those advocates of abolishing the police to senior positions in the Department of Justice. One of those was a George Soros-backed prosecutor in Massachusetts who, like the DC City Council, put out a list of crimes that she would not allow her prosecutors to prosecute, endangering the citizens she was charged to protect.

What was her reward for refusing to prosecute violent criminals? President

Biden nominated her to be U.S. Attorney for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and every Senate Democrat voted to confirm her as the U.S. Attorney, the chief Federal prosecutor, in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Now, once President Biden said he would sign this bill, the political pressure it has put on the DC City Council has had enormous impact. This week, the council tried to withdraw the legislation. "Never mind," was their response. But simply withdrawing a bill doesn't permanently get rid of it under the Home Rule Act, which allows Congress to review legislation that comes out of the DC City Council.

To permanently stop the DC Council's harmful bill, Congress should proceed and pass the Resolution of Disapproval and President Biden should follow through on his commitment to sign it.

A recent poll found that 77 percent of Americans believe that violent crime is a major problem. Democrats, tragically, have been soft on crime for years; and crime has surged as a result.

At the end of the day, it is not complicated: If you let violent criminals go, they commit more and more violent crimes. We have seen patterns all over the country of mass murders carried out by violent criminals who Democrat DA's have let out of jail, only to see them turn around and commit more violent crimes.

Congress, right now, has an opportunity to come together and to speak in a bipartisan way and to say: Enough is enough is enough. Stop letting violent criminals out of jail. Let's protect our citizens. Let's do our job.

I urge every Senator, Republican and Democrat, to support this resolution.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. MARSHALL. Madam President, I rise today in support of H.J. Res. 26, a resolution to overturn the recent law passed by the DC Council to revise the city's Criminal Code.

I was pleased to join Senator HAGERTY as an original cosponsor of the Senate's version he introduced in February.

The Nation's Capital is a unique American city in that it was established through the ratification of the U.S. Constitution in order to host the Federal system of government established by our Founders, separate from the authority of any one single State. Founded in 1790, the city has grown immensely since its earliest years and, with a population of nearly 700,000, has become one of the largest cities in the region.

In addition to the residents of this city and those who commute daily from neighboring Maryland and Virginia, Washington, DC, hosts nearly 20 million visitors on an annual basis—one of the most visited cities in the United States—as Americans from all

50 States, including my home of Kansas, come to the seat of their government to meet with their elected officials and visit the National Mall, memorials, and museums their tax dollars go to maintaining every year.

Sadly, as the Capital City has expanded, so, too, has the influence of the far-left politicians who serve as members of the council. Similar to their Democratic counterparts in the White House, Congress, and other U.S. metro areas, the DC Council has gone full tilt in giving the keys of this city to its criminals and vagrants and in failing in their duty to protect its inhabitants and visitors.

This culture of lawlessness—the same that is on display at our southern border, where just yesterday we learned that two of the four Americans kidnapped by the Gulf Cartel were brutally murdered—is a product of cashless bail laws and efforts to defund the police.

In DC, these efforts have come in the form of major cuts to the city's police department. In 2020, the council implemented a \$15 million cut to their own police force—\$15 million. Since then, the number of sworn officers has decreased steadily year over year, and, predictably, crime has been running rampant ever since. In 2021, more than 200 homicides were committed. It was the first time homicides surpassed 200 since 2003. In 2022, DC topped its mark again, and the trend is continuing in 2023. Crime is up 25 percent from this time last year; murders are up 33 percent; sexual abuse crimes are up 120 percent; and motor vehicle thefts are up 108 percent.

Shockingly, despite these staggering numbers, the DC Council, over the objections of the city's police chief and chief prosecutor, moved in November of last year to eliminate mandatory minimum sentences and reduce maximum penalties for these very crimes.

Thankfully, the same Constitution that established the Capital City gave Congress authority over the District, and while I am a strong supporter of local control, Republicans in Congress have taken an important stand to not stand by and watch as the radical DC Council further inflames the crime-wave engulfing our constituents' Capital City.

I myself am afraid for my own wife to walk from our apartment to the Capitol. I am afraid for my own staff to walk from working here to their own homes. This last Christmas, I gave every woman on my staff a special device to be able to defend herself should she be attacked. This is real. We see it every day in this city. We see the crime everywhere we go. This city is no longer safe. This city no longer belongs to the people. This city now belongs to the criminals.

I know the Democrats in the House did not get the memo from the President in time that he would sign our legislation into law—that of overturning the DC Council's overhaul—but

I am glad our colleagues across the aisle here in the Senate will be joining him in passing this important bill in order to blunt the crime victimizing the residents and visitors of this city and the efforts of the DC Council to return the District of Columbia back to being the murder capital of America.

Unfortunately, we know this is just a politically motivated move to protect their electoral chances in 2024. Lawlessness runs deep in the Democratic Party, and no matter how they vote today, much more must be done to turn back the harm they have done to our inner cities and at our southern border.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

Mr. RICKETTS. Madam President, we are here today to discuss the resolution disapproving the DC Council's efforts to water down the city's Criminal Code.

Now, some might be wondering why the Congress has a say in the DC Criminal Code. The reason goes back to the founding documents of our country. DC's very existence is in our Constitution, which calls for a district not exceeding 10 square miles to be the seat for the Government of the United States so that, while DC is a place where people live and work, it belongs to the entire Nation.

Citizens from all across this country come here—students, for example—to learn about American history. In fact, I was meeting with some students just earlier today. Citizens come here to interact with their elected officials. We are here today because the DC City Council is trying to make this District—this constitutionally mandated seat of government—a less safe place to be able to live, work, and conduct business.

In the rewriting of DC's Criminal Code, DC is trying to make things such as first-degree murder, carjackings, robberies, burglaries, home invasions—it is trying to reduce the penalties for all of those crimes at a time when the crime rate in DC is rising. For the first time in a couple of decades, DC has seen 2 years of 200 or more homicides. Over the last 5 years, carjackings have increased every single year. In fact, in the first 67 days of this year, reported carjackings have been at 100. Crime, year over year, in DC is up 22 percent, and the DC police chief has said, when they arrest a homicide suspect, that suspect, on average, has been arrested 11 times previously.

Now, there are smart ways to think about criminal justice reform, and that is what we did in Nebraska back in 2015, but reducing the penalties and being soft on crime is not that approach. Rather than reduce the penalties for violent crimes, the city of DC should look at what Omaha, NE—my home city—has done and how they have used community engagement with the police force to reduce homicides. In fact, they have reduced homicides in

each of the last 2 years. This is common sense.

We need to stand with law enforcement and respect their work to put criminals behind bars. We need to stand with the law-abiding victims and give them the justice they deserve, and we need to make sure that government is fulfilling its obligation to keep people safe.

That is exactly what we have done in Nebraska. We have rejected the woke politics of these soft-on-crime policies that reduce penalties. In Nebraska, we back the blue. We stand with law enforcement officers as they work to identify, investigate, and arrest criminals. As a seat of government, DC's rising crime is a threat to all Americans and to Nebraskans, which is why the House and the Senate have an obligation to act.

I am grateful to my esteemed colleague from the great State of Tennessee for introducing this resolution and for his leadership on this issue.

I urge all of my colleagues to vote in favor of this as well.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. HAGERTY. Madam President, I understand that this was the first opportunity for my colleague from Nebraska to speak before the Senate. I want to commend him and thank him for being here to support my legislation today.

Congratulations.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. HAGERTY. Madam President, just to set the stage before a few more of my colleagues come to speak on this resolution, just moments ago, over at Union Station, where there is a protest going on right now protesting our actions here, with people protesting in favor of this soft-on-crime position that the DC Council has taken, those protesters just witnessed an attempted carjacking. The assailant who was attempting the carjacking was confronted, and as that person fled, they ran right through the crowd.

That is the situation that we are dealing with right now, and I so appreciate my colleagues being here to speak on it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Ms. ERNST. Madam President, about 20 million people a year visit our Nation's Capital, Washington, DC. They come to see our hallowed Capitol, DC's inspiring monuments and museums, and to experience the city's lively melting pot of cultures.

As we have seen across many major cities in our country, bad policymaking has turned a once vibrant city into a scarcely recognizable shadow of its former self. The DC Council is throwing gas on the fire through its woke criminal policies, which will embolden criminals and victimize residents and visitors alike.

We are seeing a staggering increase in crime. The stats speak for themselves. For example, today is day 67 of 2023—day 67—and already this year, there have been more than 1,200 carjackings—it sounds like 1,201 carjackings as of today—422 robberies, and a murder happening every 2 days—day 67, folks.

These aren't just numbers. These crimes have victims, and those victims have families.

The sad reality is that no one is off limits to criminals running rampant in our Capital. It is simply unsafe for everyone.

Just last month, a 15-year-old tried to carjack an elderly woman on her way to chemotherapy. The victim, affectionately known as "Grandma," said:

Baby, you better shoot me, because you're not taking my car.

Elsewhere, two children, ages 6 and 9, were shot while getting off a city bus—children who were just coming home from school.

Again, the very evening DC's Mayor threatened to veto the council's ill-conceived crime bill, an 8-year-old was shot by a stray bullet.

Despite the rise in crime and the chorus of opposition, the DC Council plowed forward with its lunacy.

DC is seeing an explosion of carjackings, and what does their policy do? Reduce sentencing for carjackers.

Similarly, murders are through the roof, and yet this new policy reduces penalties for murderers.

As one commentator put it, "serious crime is increasing in the District of Columbia. So the city council has decided to reduce sentences for those who commit serious crimes."

These ideas are crazy, folks. Even DC's very liberal Mayor says so:

This bill does not make us safer.

The law was so reckless—so irresponsible—that only those congressional Democrats in the most extreme wing of the "defund the police" crowd defended the code change publicly. In fact, most Democrats did a complete 180 when the spotlight shined on their preferred criminal justice policies.

The Mayor opposes the policy. The DC police chief opposes it. And, most importantly, DC residents oppose it. So why is the DC Council doing it, and why are the far-left Democrats in Congress supporting it? Look no further than the policy's advocates, who say it will "advance racial justice in the criminal legal system."

Folks, this is just one more of the woke nonsense which gave us "defund the police."

The DC Council is free to make their own policy, but we in Congress cannot sacrifice the safety and security of the residents and visitors to our Nation's Capital on the religious altar of the ultraprogressive social justice agenda. While it is foolish for radical, leftist Democrats on the DC Council to support this, it is not surprising. It is also

unsurprising that 173 House Democrats support the policy.

And, frankly, it is unsurprising that Biden quickly flip-flopped on his position when he realized the public and the press were not going along with this nonsense. That is right. When it became clear that this resolution was going to pass, President Biden reversed course. And now the DC Council has joined him in his flip-flop.

I can only wonder: What changed? Was it the shootout a few short blocks from the Capitol? Or maybe it was the assault on a Member of Congress just 3 days after President Biden issued a formal statement supporting DC's law? Whatever the reason, his flip-flop is a welcome surprise to those of us with common sense.

Welcome to the real world, Mr. President and DC Council.

Perhaps the "defund the police" crowd has finally learned what everyone else has known for ages: Criminal penalties are not just suggestions; they protect the public.

Folks, it is time to get serious about crime on our streets, and there is no better place to start than by blocking this reckless policy.

I am proud to join my colleagues in supporting this resolution because, to paraphrase one of my House colleagues, "this policy ain't it."

So my thanks to Senator HAGERTY for his leadership on this resolution.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. ROSEN). The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, I, too, come to the floor today to talk about the soft-on-crime policies of Democrats in Washington, DC.

In 2020, Democrats all across the country started their movement to defund the police. Almost immediately, we saw burning cities across the country, from the east coast all the way to Portland, OR.

Democratic leaders turned their backs on police officers all across the country. As a result, police officers began to retire or resign, and they did so in record numbers. The results were as painful as they were predictable. Violent crime skyrocketed all across America. We saw the fastest murder rate increase in our history. Homicides rose to a 25-year high. This is no surprise. If police officers are not able to do their jobs, then the streets of each town in America are not safe.

Well, today on the floor, Madam President, Senate Republicans are going to act to stop this recklessness. Thanks to the leadership of Senator HAGERTY, who is leading our discussion and our efforts, Senate Republicans are going to vote to stop Washington, DC's radical new legislation, this legislation that lets criminals get out of jail free. Senate Republicans are going to vote to make our Nation's Capital a safer place to visit, a safer place to live, and a safer place to work.

Wyoming families ask me all the time if it is safe for them to visit

Washington, DC, or if it is safe for their kids to come to Washington, DC, for something like History Day, an opportunity to see the Nation's Capital. Imagine that: many American families actually afraid to visit or have their children visit our Nation's Capital.

Liberal cities all across the country have become danger zones. Families in Wyoming watch the nightly news. They can't believe their eyes. They see smashed storefronts in New York and in Chicago. They see innocent people getting mugged on the streets. They see it in New York, and they see it in Washington, DC. The cities run by liberals are not safe. Across the country, we have hit new records for carjackings, for assaults. But instead of backing the blue, Democrats are turning cities into safe havens for criminals. That is exactly what has happened here in Washington, DC.

So the city council here in Washington, DC, recently voted to eliminate mandatory minimum sentences for every crime except for first-degree murder. Well, there is a value in mandatory minimum sentences. It tells judges the bare minimum punishment for criminal behavior. Mandatory minimum sentences stop liberal judges from going soft and softer on crime. So it is no wonder that Democrats have waged war on mandatory minimums for at least the last decade.

The new DC law would also reduce maximum sentences for violent criminals like carjackers. For some gun charges, the maximum sentence would go from 15 years down to less than 5. The new crime law in the District of Columbia would mean more violent criminals free to roam the streets of our Nation's Capital and prey on innocent people.

Even the liberal Washington Post has said that the bill that passed the DC City Council is a bad idea.

Carjacking is already a major problem in Washington. We are seeing it in liberal cities all across the Nation. Carjackings in DC have tripled since 2019, and we just heard on the floor of the Senate today that a carjacking has recently taken place right down the street from the Capitol Building. That is today. Under the new Criminal Code, the maximum sentence for armed carjacking would be cut almost in half.

Why would the DC City Council reward the criminals who are creating this chaos in our Nation's Capital? These criminals and the liberal DC City Council members are driving away tourists from my home State of Wyoming who want to see their Nation's Capital. It is a part of education for so many young people.

Democrats in the House got behind the DC soft-on-crime policies when over 170 Democrats in the House voted to protect the criminals, not the citizens.

So Joe Biden is now trying to hide his soft-on-crime record. He just very recently announced that he would now support our Republican position.

This resolution we will soon be voting on will be a victory for every American who wants to feel safe when they visit their Nation's Capital. But Washington, DC, is just one city. It shouldn't stop here. Democrats' soft-on-crime policies remain in effect in liberal-led cities all across America. Democratic lawmakers and especially Democratic mayors need to take notice of this action by the U.S. Senate today.

It is time to start enforcing the law. It is time to get rid of prosecutors who are weak and prosecutors who are woke. They are not helping our country. We need to stand with law enforcement. We need to ensure police officers have the resources they need to protect our communities.

The American people overwhelmingly reject the soft-on-crime policies of Democrats in Washington. America is based on the rule of law. Lawlessness should have no place in this Nation. It is time to stop the crime, time to stop the chaos we are seeing in cities all across our country.

Republicans are united by solutions—solutions to make American communities safer. That is what this body is going to vote on today: to improve the security and the safety of those in our Nation's Capital.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, I am so pleased to come to the floor today in support of Senator HAGERTY's legislation. It is so appropriate that we take this up, and I look forward to supporting the legislation as we vote later today and seeing this move to passage, seeing this become law, and seeing this add to protection for the citizens who live here in DC.

Over the past few years, our Nation has certainly witnessed a devastating increase in violent crime. Compared to mid-2019, America's largest cities have experienced a 50-percent increase in homicides and a 36-percent increase in aggravated assaults. It is unimaginable that, given the rise in violence in this country, the elected officials of the DC City Council think it is a good idea to reduce the amount of jail time for violent and deadly crimes. This includes carjackings, and Senator HAGERTY referenced one that was taking place in front of the protesters who were out there because they opposed this bill.

Now, these crimes are rampant here in our Nation's Capital. In fact, as of this morning, the Metropolitan Police Department tells us that motor vehicle theft is up more than 100 percent compared to last year. Homicides are up 33 percent. If you look at the direction those stats have gone over the past 10 years, it is not encouraging—incidences of sex abuse up 120 percent, property crime up 30 percent.

You don't have to live in the District to know that something has taken hold here, and reducing penalties for terrorizing innocent civilians is not the way to break free. Citizens should not feel

unsafe in their communities, no matter where they live.

Today's vote is about protecting the people from this failed leadership, but it is also about holding the DC City Council accountable for prioritizing a cynical political maneuver over the safety of the very people they represent. This body has made a name for itself, this DC City Council, this legislative body for the District of Columbia. They have made a name for themselves because they have cherry-picked some violations and have chosen to impose some truly ridiculous restrictions on what District residents can and cannot do. They don't deserve the benefit of the doubt here.

Right now, the council is ready to retreat, but it would be a dereliction of our duty as Senators to allow them to do that. That is why we are supporting Senator HAGERTY in his resolution of disapproval and in his work to stop this foolishness from the DC Council.

We also have a duty to update and improve existing laws to combat criminals as their tactics evolve.

Earlier this year, I introduced the REPORT Act, which will go a long way in helping law enforcement tackle child exploitation online. The past few years of hearings with the Consumer Protection Subcommittee have made it clear that we need to modernize our child safety laws.

The explosion of social media and the expansion of underage users is making these children vulnerable to predators, and law enforcement simply cannot keep up with what is happening online while they are out trying also to find the burglaries, the robberies, the carjackings.

Once the Senate passes the REPORT Act, online platforms are going to be required to report all child sexual abuse material found on their sites to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children's CyberTipline. Current law makes that step voluntary, but that standard is not working. We have to change it, and we have to make violating that new standard really hurt.

The bill significantly increases fines imposed on platforms that refuse to do this bare minimum. It also requires platforms to report child sex trafficking and enticement crimes. Current law imposes no obligation—none, zero—on platforms to report those materials, which means that most of these crimes are, unfortunately, going undetected.

The last two pieces of the bill will help law enforcement and advocates work together to bring down predators. It includes my END Child Exploitation Act, which extends the retention period for possession of abusive material to 1 year. This will ensure that law enforcement has enough time to access the evidence held by these companies and then prosecute the offenders. It also makes it clear that the vendors working with NCMEC, minors, and parents who report to the CyberTipline

won't be held liable for possessing child sexual abuse material.

I am so pleased that so many of my colleagues have come to the floor today to talk about the rise in crime. The backlash against the DC crime bill highlights the fundamental difference between the left's priorities and the priorities of the American people. Anybody with a bit of common sense would look at the DC City Council's proposal and ask: Why would they even consider sending such a weak-on-crime message? It is an invitation to criminals to come and carry out their crimes.

It is time for the left to revisit their priorities and start paying attention to what the crime stats are telling them. The status quo isn't working, but surrendering to violence, lawlessness, and despair isn't the answer either.

On the Federal level, my Democratic colleagues need to support Federal, State, and local law enforcement and demand that this President nominate experienced judges.

Here in the Senate, we can help by making sure that police departments are able to hire, train, and equip officers with the tools that they need to do their job. Last Congress, Senator HAGERTY and I introduced the Restoring Law and Order Act, which would have repurposed the billions of dollars the Democrats handed to the IRS and used that money to support law enforcement and eliminate the rape kit backlog.

We can also modernize existing laws that are no longer working. I welcome my Democratic colleagues to come talk with me about how the REPORT Act will help catch child predators who are taking advantage of new technology to find their victims.

I encourage them to join Senator HAGERTY and me in restoring law and order, and I encourage each of them to stand today with Senator HAGERTY, vote for his resolution, and take a stand against the warped priorities of the DC City Council.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

Mr. LEE. Madam President, Washington, DC, is our Nation's Capital. There is perhaps no city in America more capable of demonstrating the idea of the United States as a melting pot than is the District of Columbia. Here, you find people from every walk of life. It is the seat of our national government, where people from across the country come to work, seek an education, engage with history, witness what goes on here, and take look at our Nation's monuments and historical venues that can be found here.

Washington, DC, in short, belongs to all Americans. Tragically, a visible increase in crime has plagued DC. It is backed by numbers, felt by residents, and seen by millions of visitors.

Since March of last year, crime in DC is up 25 percent. Homicides are up 30 percent, and motor vehicle theft is up 110 percent—110 percent.

Despite being in the midst of a crime wave, the DC City Council passed a bill that reduced criminal penalties for violent crimes, including homicide, robbery, and carjacking.

Now, what message does that send?

It is such poor logic that Mayor Bowser opposed the bill, admitting that “this bill doesn’t make us safer.” She is absolutely right; it doesn’t make us safer. Yet the DC City Council chose to override her veto and force this through to make it the law of the land, even though it doesn’t make us safer. It makes things much, much worse, and it makes things worse in many of the same ways that DC residents are already suffering.

When the DC City Council is to the left of Mayor Bowser, we have a serious problem. When carjackings are up 110 percent, this shouldn’t be a partisan issue. Even President Biden telegraphed in a recent tweet:

I don’t support some of the changes D.C. Council put forward over the Mayor’s objections—such as lowering penalties for carjackings.

If the Senate votes to overturn what DC Council did—I’ll sign it.

President Biden is right. Now is not the time to get soft on crime.

This is, by the way, a good time to demonstrate that this is not or should not be a partisan issue. How fitting is it that this bill, once it is passed by the Senate, is expected to be the first piece of legislation signed into law by President Biden during this Congress. It is also fitting that the House sponsor of this bill is none other than second-term Congressman ANDREW CLYDE, a Republican and a member of the House Freedom Caucus. So if this bill is able to unite the House Freedom Caucus and President Biden, it is doing something right.

Now, it is not often that I find myself in the company of President Biden and Mayor Bowser. We have already seen this play out with the campaign to “defund the police.” Cities with this disposition quickly discovered that lawlessness begets anarchy. Since the campaign began, crime has skyrocketed, and police resignations have soared. What started as a series of calls for justice culminated at a 25-year high in the national crime rate. Let us not make the same mistake twice—not here, not now. We can’t afford to make such a mistake.

Voting for this resolution presents an opportunity for my Democratic colleagues to make a distinction. Will you join us in a bipartisan recognition that we cannot endanger the lives of DC residents by allowing this soft-on-crime bill to go into effect, or will you stand with the DC City Council and put politics above public safety?

I emphatically support Senator HAGERTY’s resolution of disapproval because the residents and visitors of this city have a reasonable expectation of safety. I encourage my friends across the aisle to support this commonsense resolution and send a message that the

Democratic Party is not beholden to its fringes, particularly where, as here, its fringes would lead to increased crime rate and additional unnecessary suffering.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. HAGERTY. Madam President, I would just like to say thank you to all of my colleagues today who have joined me. I thank Senator LEE for his thoughtful remarks. I am looking forward to a very robust showing this evening as we vote on my resolution.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 713

Mr. COTTON. Madam President, Washington, DC, is in the middle of a carjacking crime wave. There have been more than 100 carjackings in our Nation’s Capital so far this year. It is only March 8. I think that is more than one a day. Two-thirds of DC carjackers use guns to force their terrified victims out of their vehicles.

What do the Washington Democrats do in response to this carjacking crime wave? Do they support “fund the police,” install more cameras, put more cops on the streets? No. They passed a law to reduce criminal penalties for carjacking—reduce criminal penalties for carjackings and other serious crimes. I wish I were joking; but, sadly, I am not.

Washington’s answer to higher crime is less prison time for violent criminals. The only reason this is not going to happen is because Congress retains its constitutional authority over our Federal city because Washington is not a State, nor should it ever be a State. But in this case, some Democrats—even President Biden—got skittish about the political price they would pay for being this weak on crime, so they broke ranks and headed for the hills.

When House Republicans voted to disapprove Washington’s soft-on-crime bill, 31 Democrats voted with them. I suspect something similar will play out later here today. President Biden says he will sign the resolution of disapproval once it passes because—and these are his words:

I don’t support some of the changes the DC Council put forward over the Mayor’s objections, such as lowering penalties for carjackings.

Those are the President’s words. I welcome the Democrats’ rebuke of the Washington, DC, City Council. I hope it is more than a passing moment of sanity, but I do have my doubts.

So let’s put their new tough-on-crime attitude to the test. It is really not enough to stop carjackings just here in Washington, DC, because carjacking is not a Washington, DC, problem alone. Many cities are suffering from carjacking crime waves as well, just as they are suffering from increases in the murder rate and other terrible crimes.

According to a recent report, carjackings rose an astonishing 29 per-

cent in seven major cities between 2020 and 2022. Why the increase? Well, one reason is the FIRST STEP Act, soft-on-crime bill that Congress passed in the final days of 2018. That bill let criminals out of jail early for even serious violent offenses like mild molestation, bank robbery, assaulting a police officer, and, yes, carjacking.

The FIRST STEP Act wasn’t the only effort to coddle violent criminals, but it is an egregious law that made clear too many of our elected officials no longer take serious crime seriously. The FIRST STEP Act increased, by about 15 percent, the amount of time that Federal criminals, even carjackers, can get off their sentences for so-called good behavior. This is in addition to the extensive sentencing reductions and early release programs for other crimes in the bill. The result was that if a carjacker, say, got 6 years in prison, he could be back out on the street to offend again in as few as 5 years.

It is time to rectify this mistake and to keep carjackers behind bars. That is why I am offering my bill, the No Early Release for Carjackers Act. The bill is as simple as its title. If you go to jail for violently hijacking someone’s car, you should serve your entire sentence, not get time off for supposed good behavior.

So if President Biden and congressional Democrats are really committed to getting tough on carjackers—not just here in Washington, DC, where they drive around a lot—then they should support this effort.

I know that some of the defenders of the First Step Act will say, yes, carjackers should get out of jail early for good behavior. These criminals will, after all, get out of jail one day—or so the argument goes—so shouldn’t we rehabilitate them by rewarding them, encouraging their good behavior?

To which I answer: Sure, we can reward good behavior for carjackers in prison. We can encourage good behavior, but we shouldn’t reward it in a way that endangers the public. Letting dangerous criminals out of jail early endangers the public.

If the Members of the Senate are truly concerned with rewarding good behavior, we can offer well-behaved inmates other incentives, say, greater access to prison telephones, transfers to lower security facilities. And carjackers will remain eligible for other incentive programs that are so beloved by the soft-on-crime set like gardening classes or whatever else it is liberals think will turn supposedly hardened criminals into model citizens. But there is simply no good reason to release dangerous criminals from prison early, especially not in the middle of a violent carjacking crime wave.

Crime is a policy choice and the choice is simple: If we put criminals behind bars, crime goes down; if we let criminals run amuck, crime goes up. We have seen the consequences of letting carjackers run amuck. Now we

have a choice to fix that terrible mistake.

Therefore, Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. 713, which is at the desk. I further ask that the bill be considered, and read a third time and passed, and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. DURBIN. Reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, last year, as chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, I convened a bipartisan hearing on carjacking. It was the first-ever Judiciary Committee hearing on the subject. We heard from experts in law enforcement and the automobile industry. And since then, I have been working with Senator CHUCK GRASSLEY, Republican from Iowa, on a bill we are going to introduce soon on the subject.

The Senator from Arkansas is a member of the Committee on the Judiciary. He did not attend our hearing, and he has never raised this issue with me. In fact, he introduced the bill we are considering at this moment yesterday.

Why now? Well, he is very open when he said on the floor and what he said in his press release. Later this afternoon, there will be a vote on the DC Criminal Code. One of the issues is carjacking. He is trying to hitch a ride on this train in terms of the discussion of the penalties for crime. It is no coincidence.

Senator COTTON has brought this bill to the floor because, today, we are voting on that resolution. The opponents of the resolution have focused on the bill's new sentence for carjacking, reducing the penalty from 40 years to 24, and ignored the fact that the resolution increases sentences for a host of other violent offenses and goes after crime guns—a source of gun crimes in many cities, including Washington and those I represent.

Don't take my word for it. The Senator's own press release explicitly links his new bill to today's vote. The Senator knows this bill is not going to pass today. He wants a Democrat to object so he can falsely claim we don't care about carjacking.

The reality is that the Senator's bill would not help prevent carjacking, and it would make our Federal prisons less safe.

Let me explain. The Senator from Arkansas' bill is called No Early Release for Carjackers Act. Catchy title. But it fails to recognize one basic fact: Carjackers cannot get early release from the Federal system. Like every other Federal sentence, it is measured in years. Carjacking sentences have a full-term release date and a good conduct release date. If you go to Federal

prison, you earn 54 days a year of good conduct credit if you follow the rules. If you break the rules, they take away your good conduct time. That has been the standard in the Sentencing Reform Act of 1984, which abolished Federal parole.

Every Federal judge knows about good conduct time when they impose a sentence. Earning good conduct time isn't getting released early. It is getting released when you really expected to, so long as you behave and follow the rules.

I made it a point of visiting prisons regularly as a Member of Congress and Member of the U.S. Senate. I recommend it to all my colleagues. We spend a lot of time talking about criminal sentencing and criminals themselves and very little time actually visiting prisons to see what life is like behind bars. It is an educational experience.

I can tell you one thing you will come to realize right off the bat: It is a dangerous place. The men and women who are corrections officers in the Federal system literally risk their lives every single day to keep those incarcerated who have been sentenced by the courts. They ask us for very little: enough people to do the job right, safety in the workplace, and those few incentives that make it possible for them to have a decent day at work and go home alive at the end of the day.

One of those things is good conduct. If they can incentivize prisoners not to beat up other prisoners or the correction officers themselves with the promise of good conduct reductions in their sentences, it is a very important thing to do. We want these men and women, these law enforcement professionals, to have respect and also to have the law on their side.

There are no Federal offenses that disqualify you from good conduct time—not a single one. And for good reason. Good conduct time is an incentive to follow the rules in prison. That is what we want people who have broken the law to do while they are in prison: learn to follow the rules. The threat of losing good conduct time is also a deterrent against breaking the rules. That helps prevent violence in prison, protects correction officers, and protects the other incarcerated people. Good conduct time is a critical tool for Federal prison officials to maintain order. That is why we don't disqualify anyone from good conduct time based on their offense of conviction. This bill would be the first time in history. We have never done it before, and we shouldn't start now.

Now, this is not the first time that this Senator has opposed efforts to rehabilitate prisoners. The reason he is trying to dismantle good conduct credit is because carjackers are already excluded from an important rehab program created by the FIRST STEP Act. He comes to the floor regularly to criticize the FIRST STEP Act, which he didn't support, and it is his right

not to. He fails to mention two things. It was a bipartisan measure introduced by the primary sponsor at the time, Senator GRASSLEY, and myself and Senator LEE. It was signed into law by President Donald Trump. Soft on crime? This bill passed by an overwhelming vote of 87 to 12 in the Senate. It was signed into law by President Trump.

Unlike most Republican Senators, Senator COTTON opposed the FIRST STEP Act. The FIRST STEP Act established earned time credits that allowed prisoners to earn time off their sentences in exchange for completing programs that help reduce the likelihood they will commit a new crime after their release. The bill included a compromise and excluded from the program individuals who had committed any of dozens of offenses. Carjacking is one of those offenses. So the criticism he is making of the FIRST STEP Act doesn't apply to the argument he made on the floor.

No matter how many recidivism-reducing programs a carjacker completes, no matter how many classes he takes or how many skills he learns, he cannot earn a day off his sentence under the FIRST STEP Act—exactly the opposite of what the Senator from Arkansas just said.

That compromise wasn't enough for the junior Senator from Arkansas. He offered an amendment to the FIRST STEP Act that would have excluded tens of thousands of low-level offenders for earned time credits. And I stood here on the Senate floor to oppose that amendment because I knew then and I know now the purpose of a recidivism reduction program is to reduce recidivism. Almost everyone in the Federal Bureau of Prisons will get out one day. And when we exclude people from these programs, we do not facilitate successful reentry, and we do not reduce recidivism.

Now let's talk about what we can do to reduce carjacking. I have been working for months on a bill with Senator GRASSLEY, a Republican from Iowa, as chairman of the Judiciary Committee. Our Combating Carjacking Act is based on recommendations from experts who came to our hearing last year.

I have discussed one key provision many times with the sheriff of Cook County, Tom Dart, and here is what it does. Almost any car manufacturer today has some kind of vehicle location system built into it. It is a device that automatically calls for help if you have been in an accident.

This system is a great way to locate cars right away in real time after they have been carjacked, and that should be a huge deterrent to carjacking. If you take a car by threat of violence, law enforcement should be able to find you right away, take back the car, and put you under arrest for your crime.

But right now, law enforcement has a hard time getting auto manufacturers to provide that location data, even when the victim, the vehicle owner, is

standing there saying: Please help the police find the person who just stole my car.

Why? Some manufacturers are better than others about this, but they tell us that we are worried about violating the Federal Driver Privacy Act, and they are worried about liability.

So the bill we are working on, on carjacking, creates an exception to the Driver Privacy Act. It says, if a car manufacturer gets a reasonable, good-faith request from law enforcement for vehicle location data after a carjacking, they can provide that location data without liability because we want to make carjacking a crime that never pays off, and it won't if carjacked vehicles can be immediately tracked and recovered. That is why we are pursuing this.

As I said before, I agree with Senator COTTON, carjacking is a serious problem that needs local and Federal solutions. I invite him to join me and Senator GRASSLEY in our bipartisan effort. I don't agree that wiping out good conduct credit for Federal prisoners is the way to do it.

Madam President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from Arkansas.

Mr. COTTON. Well, Madam President, I am disappointed that our bipartisan bonhomie this week about carjacking only lasted as long as overturning Washington, DC's law.

We should address how we can stop more carjackings. I don't think we should blame cars for carjacking the way some would blame guns for gun violence. The simplest way to stop carjacking is to lock carjackers away in prison for a long time and not to let them out early.

And the Senator from Illinois, I will say, is right. I was the most implacable foe of the FIRST STEP Act, and I remain so. Guilty as charged. I will walk free, like most violent criminals in Washington, DC, who plead guilty as well, but continue my advocacy against that law which has led to hundreds and hundreds of its beneficiaries committing violent crimes. It was a mistake in 2018 when we passed it. Eighty-seven Senators committed the mistake, including most Republicans. President Trump made a mistake in supporting the FIRST STEP Act. That law is dangerous to public safety.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Madam President, I rise in opposition to the resolution by Congress to overturn a law that was duly passed and enacted by the elected representatives of the people of the District of Columbia.

I support self-determination. I support self-governance. I support full democracy for the nearly 700,000 residents of the District of Columbia. Citizens who pay more Federal taxes collectively than the people in 21 States, citizens who serve their country in the

Armed Forces, citizens who live in the Capital of the oldest democracy deserve the same rights to full democracy and self-determination as the citizens who live in any other State or any other city in the United States of America.

That is why I have long championed and supported the cause of DC statehood. But I want to point out, that is a fight not only for voting representation in the House and the Senate but also for the principle of local economy, the principle of self-determination also known as home rule.

In my view, this resolution is an attack on the democratic rights of the people of the District of Columbia, which has its own duly elected democratic representatives: the Mayor and the DC Council. Its residents and citizens are fully capable of deciding their own law and deciding their own future.

The Congress should not be overriding the will of the people of DC as reflected in their elected representatives. This process of directly overruling a law passed by the District of Columbia has not been used for 30 years—not for 30 years—and we should not start it now.

This bill was passed by the DC Council. It was vetoed by the Mayor. And I share some of the concerns that have been expressed by the Mayor. But then, the city council overruled the Mayor's veto by a vote of 12 to 1. And here is what the Mayor of the District of Columbia says; that while she had differences with what the council did, she strongly, strongly encourages this Senate to uphold the larger principle of democracy for the people of the District of Columbia.

Here is a letter she sent to all of us on February 23.

[A]s Mayor and the Chief Executive Officer of the District, I call on all senators who share a commitment to basic democratic principles of self-determination and local control to vote "NO"—

Vote no—

on any disapproval resolutions involving duly enacted laws of the District of Columbia.

The Mayor points out in this letter that she is in a back-and-forth with the council to try to address some of the concerns that she has expressed, concerns which I understand and which I share. But she is very clear that the U.S. Congress should not be bigfooting the decisions made by the elected representatives of the District of Columbia.

No other jurisdiction in the United States of America has its laws subject to veto by the U.S. Congress. We all have Governors of our State. We all have State legislators. We have cities with mayors and elected councils. No one here would appreciate the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives interfering and overturning decisions made by their State representatives or their local representatives, even if we might disagree with some of those decisions from time to time. And yet that

is what we are doing to the people of the District of Columbia having elected their representatives, the Mayor and the council, to represent them.

We must ensure that the people who live in the Capital of the world's oldest democracy have the same democratic rights as the people who live in every other part of the country.

Now, I do want to address some of the particulars here because we have heard from lots of people, especially our Republican colleagues, that what the DC Council did and the DC government did was so egregious that we have really no alternative but to make a decision we haven't made for 30 years, which is to overturn a law that was duly passed by the DC government.

So let's take a look at it.

Even opponents within the District of Columbia acknowledge that the majority—the great majority—of the revised Criminal Code is noncontroversial, providing essential updates and clarification to a criminal code that is in desperate need of modernization. The Mayor herself who vetoed the legislation says she supports 95 percent of it and has offered concrete proposals to address the other concerns that she points out that even though she disagrees with 5 percent, that is no reason for the U.S. Congress to overturn a law that was passed by the government of DC.

Why did the District of Columbia revise its code? Because it is hopelessly outdated and confusing. It was written in 1901, more than 120 years ago. Many of our States have updated our laws since then—most of them, if not all of them—but in DC, while they made some changes to some parts over that 120 years, they had never taken a comprehensive look at the DC Criminal Code. We all know a lot has changed since 1901.

And so the revised DC Criminal Code is the result of an exhaustive effort led by the Criminal Code Reform Commission, an independent DC agency established in 2016 and comprised of non-partisan experts. The commission drafted the code over nearly 5 years in a fully public process that included 51 public meetings, extensive public feedback, and robust negotiations.

The advisory group that unanimously approved the recommended changes included representatives from the Office of the U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia and the Office of the Attorney General for the District of Columbia.

The new code removes some obsolete provisions. It ensures that sentences are more proportionate to the actual sentencing. It simplifies overlapping charges and addresses missing and inconsistent laws that create legal loopholes that people have been able to slip through.

Now, while I may not have supported every one of these hundreds of provisions in the revised Criminal Code if I were sitting on the DC Council—I am not sitting on the DC City Council and

neither is any Senator in this Chamber. None of my 99 other colleagues were there to hear all the testimony that was heard by those who made these decisions on behalf of their constituents as elected representatives.

Let's dig a little deeper into some of the changes that were made because listening to some of the public discourse, you would think—I know my friend, the Senator from New Jersey, has heard this—you would think that, boy, the DC Council just went wild with this leftist effort to loosen the laws and let criminals run free.

Well, let's take a look at what they did. They raised some penalties. In some cases, they looked at actual sentences, not just in DC but other States, and lowered them, and in some cases, they closed legal loopholes.

Here is where they raised penalties: attempted murder. The current maximum sentence in the District of Columbia is 5 years in prison for attempted murder; the maximum under the new DC law, 23½ years for attempted murder.

How does this compare to other States?

Well, there are at least seven of our States that have maximum penalties for attempted murder below the new DC maximum penalty for attempted murder.

I see the Republican leader is not on the floor. The State of Kentucky has a lower sentence for attempted murder than the revised DC Code has. Maybe tomorrow I should introduce a piece of legislation to raise the penalty for attempted murder in the State of Kentucky because I just don't think that theirs is good enough for the people of Kentucky. That is what we are doing here. We are substituting our judgment for the considered judgment of the people of the District of Columbia.

Let's look at another area: attempted sexual assault. The DC government increased penalties for sexual assault from 5 years to 15 years. Again, I surveyed some of our other States. You know, we have Senators from a number of States—at least six—that have lower penalties for attempted sexual assault than the current, new, proposed DC law, including, once again, the State of Kentucky. The State of Kentucky has a lower maximum penalty for attempted sexual assault than the new, revised DC law has.

For Federal assault on a police officer, they raised it from the current max of 10 to 14 years. For misdemeanor sexual assault, the maximum will now be 2 years, up from 180 days.

The statute also includes new offenses. As I say, we are modernizing the code, including nonvehicular negligent homicide and reckless endangerment with a firearm and new penalties, such as for offenses against vulnerable adults, in order to strengthen public safety in the District of Columbia after having listened to their constituents.

It also includes increased penalty enhancements for aggravating factors—

such as the presence of a firearm, such as property damage or having prior convictions—in addition to the base penalties that are established for various crimes.

Now, that is where they increase penalties, and that is where they close loopholes, but when you are doing comprehensive reform, you look at everything. You don't necessarily measure justice just because a maximum penalty for something goes up. Sometimes you measure justice by making sure that the penalty is proportionate to the crime.

We have had lots of debates on this floor, and the Senator from New Jersey, my friend Mr. BOOKER, has been front and center in leading the charge when it comes to criminal justice reform because we have an absolute scandal in the United States of America about the mass incarceration of people of color.

So when the DC Council passes some of these laws, people apparently ignore all of the cases they are increasing penalties for—things like attempted murder—and zeroing in on some areas where they are actually bringing sentences in line with what judges are doing based on their discretion.

A lot of attention has been given to the issue of armed carjacking because, in this case, the DC government lowered the maximum penalty for armed carjacking. They did that to bring the maximum penalty more in line with what the actual sentencing was. The current carjacking maximum after the change is 21 years. It went from 40 years down to 24 years.

Now, here is the thing: I looked again, as I know my friend from New Jersey did, at what other States' laws are for armed carjacking, their maximum penalties. Once again, in many cases, they are lower than the new DC statute, the new DC penalty. In fact, a lot of States don't even have armed carjacking statutes. So if you want a point of comparison for those States, you would look at armed robbery.

When you look at States with armed carjacking statutes and when you look at the penalties they apply for armed robbery in carjacking cases, you will find that 15 States have lower penalties than the new, lower DC maximum penalty for armed carjacking. Fifteen States represented by Senators in this Chamber who want to override DC law have sentences for armed robbery or armed carjacking lower than what DC's new penalty is. Those States include Alaska; they include Kansas; they include North Dakota; and yes, once again, they include the State of Kentucky. The State of Kentucky seems to be an outlier here in terms of low sentences for many violent crimes, lower than the newly revised code passed by the DC government.

I am not going to go into all of the other details here. I think my colleagues get the picture, which is that the elected representatives of the District of Columbia, after an exhaustive

review, made some decisions about criminal justice reform. I don't agree with every single one of them that they made, but I will tell you this: What they did is entirely defensible, and it certainly doesn't rise to the level of the U.S. Congress, for the first time in 30 years, bigfooting their decisions.

That is also the testimony we received from a number of attorneys general of our States. Everyone—including, I am proud to say, my attorney general, Anthony Brown, a former Member of the House—wrote to us all. They pointed out in their letter that the question of public safety is best left to those who are closest to the community and who are in the best position to decide these laws. They say: We know from experience that each of our jurisdictions is very different and at times requires different policy approaches.

A law that makes sense for one community may not make sense for another. If the State of Kentucky wants to have lower criminal penalties than the District of Columbia, that is their decision. As I said, based on today's action, maybe I will get up tomorrow morning and introduce a bill to change the criminal penalties in the State of Kentucky.

The bottom line is this: The people who live in the District of Columbia deserve the same right as the people who live in every other part of our country—the right to self-determination and democracy. That is what they did in passing this new law, and we should not be substituting our judgment for that of the duly-elected representatives of the people of the District of Columbia.

I now yield to the Senator from New Jersey, Mr. BOOKER.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BALDWIN). The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. BOOKER. Madam President, I want to just say that I respect and am grateful for the generosity of the chairman, the Senator from Oregon, for allowing me to slip in and say some remarks.

I want to thank Senator VAN HOLLEN for his incredible leadership on this issue.

I have the distinction of being the only one of the 100 Senators who was actually born in Washington, DC. This is the city my parents met in. This is the city they married in. My mom worked for the DC Public Schools. My father was one of the first Black salesmen hired in the entire DC region by the company IBM. I owe this city so much, and I am disappointed that there is nobody in this body who was officially elected to speak for this city.

Washington, DC, is suffering, as it has, from a violation of one of our most sacrosanct principles of the country, which is this idea that this democracy is rooted in the ideal of representative democracy, the separation of powers, and most certainly the idea that you can't have taxation without representation. In fact, DC residents pay more

per capita in Federal taxes than any other State, but yet they have no say in the Federal Government.

Madam President, 700,000 Americans, in one of the only expressions of representative democracy available to them, have 13 council people who were part of a process. As was said already by my colleague, the council members completed the monumental task of modernizing the 120-year-old DC Criminal Code to make it more consistent, clarifying conflicting provisions, and bringing it in line not just with current best practices reflected in the majority of States' criminal codes but in trying to address the urgencies of the moment wherein you have a city that is deeply concerned about the crime in its community.

DC's efforts are not unique. There are 37 States that have gone through similar processes—so-called red States, so-called blue States, and purple States.

The process was spearheaded, as my colleague said, by the independent DC Criminal Code Reform Commission, which was a nonpartisan agency that was very representative of prosecutors and victims' rights advocates. All of these nonpolitical people came and unanimously endorsed what we have before us today.

Now, the first time any partisan politician got involved was with the City Council just voting to confirm this nonpartisan body's unanimous recommendations. It was to that process that the Republican leader said: Oh, it looks like, with what they did, they are in need of adult supervision.

Think of how patronizing and paternalistic that is for this body, not being any part of this process, now suddenly saying they need adult supervision as if they are children.

The DC Criminal Code was about keeping DC safe. It is what the prosecutors involved said and what the U.S. Attorney's Office said: We need to do this to create a safer city because of the confusion in the code and the lack of having criminal penalties at all for certain crimes. All of these things opened up opportunities for DC not to have the security they wanted. So this was about DC's safety.

Unfortunately, it is now embroiled in scare tactics, where political, opportunistic actions are taking place to try to use this as a way to win political points. Even the media, for whom I have tremendous respect for its role, has been more keen on asking questions about the political analysis than actually the facts of what DC has done.

What DC has done in this bill is to actually create a tougher element on crime, tougher laws on crime. In looking at the totality of this bill, it is impossible to say that it isn't about making DC safer and having tougher penalties on crime.

My colleague went through some of this. It actually quadruples the maximum penalty for attempted murder, and it triples the maximum penalty for sexual assault because people in DC see

those as serious crimes, and they want to seriously increase the consequences for them.

DC is pro-police officer, so what did they do? They doubled the maximum penalty for misdemeanor assaults on police officers, and they increased by 40 percent the maximum penalty for a felony assault on a police officer.

Washington, DC, knows that there is too much gun violence and that they need to take action against it, so it quadruples the maximum penalty for the possession of assault rifles, for ghost guns, for restricted explosive devices. I know the NRA doesn't want laws like this, but DC residents do. It doubles the maximum penalties for possession of a firearm or a bump stock—tougher laws on guns, more serious penalties.

DC's Criminal Code actually modernizes and creates new categories of offenses that aren't currently crimes. It creates new offenses for negligent homicide. It creates new offenses for reckless endangerment with a firearm. It creates new offenses by expanding liability for sexual assault, including for the sexual abuse of a minor. It expands liability for the possession of sexual images of children.

This is a city that came together and said: We want to protect our children. We want to protect sexual assault victims. We want to better protect our police officers. We want to better protect people from murder. But no. This body now, in a rush of politics, is going to prevent a city from protecting itself.

It actually increases the protections for domestic violence victims. It criminalizes strangulation as a felony, which is currently very difficult to even prosecute. In fact, every State but South Carolina has closed this loophole, but this body is going to stop them from doing it today. It criminalizes nonconsensual conduct as a felony and quadruples the maximum penalty. It helps the victims of domestic violence better obtain civil protection orders because the current law lacks clarity and makes it very hard to do this.

Let me say this again. By rejecting this law today, by voting against this, people, in the name of being tough on crime, are actually the people who are preventing a city from better protecting itself—from better protecting its children, its sexual assault victims, its police officers. I mean, think about that.

I have not, in my 10 years in the Senate, seen such a distortion of facts, such a misrepresentation of what something is. The RCCA sets new maximum penalties for armed carjackings—my friend talked about that—and their carjacking laws now have a maximum penalty higher than Georgia, Kansas, North Dakota, and Kentucky. Maybe we should do a unanimous consent request right now saying that Kentucky is too soft on crime because DC wants higher maximum penalties.

It sets new maximum penalties for unarmed carjackings higher than Georgia, higher than Iowa, higher than North Dakota, higher than Tennessee and Kentucky. The very Senators coming down here to criticize laws—Senators from Tennessee I have seen today, from Kentucky, from Iowa—actually, their States have lower maximum penalties than what DC is trying to do, but they are going to stop DC from doing it.

Armed robbery, the same thing—higher maximum penalties than North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio.

The same thing for unarmed robbery—higher than Kansas, higher than South Dakota, higher than Tennessee, the sponsor of this bill, and Kentucky.

Yes, they may be lowering the maximum penalty, but it is still higher than so many States of the Republicans pushing this bill and not speaking to the facts of it.

I am a former big-city mayor, and there are communities like Washington, DC, all over this country that are trying to fight crime. Many of them have significant numbers of African Americans as a percentage of their population who have higher rates of victimization. Those cities are grappling with this. They feel a sense of urgency.

That is why this bill actually is raising penalties, putting in new criminal statutes, and making sure that so many of their laws are tougher than even many of the red States, like Kentucky and Tennessee here.

That is what happens in a city that has elected representatives that know that their No. 1 job is to protect the community because those communities often are being more victimized than Senators and their families are in their States.

Give DC what we believe was a revolutionary idea then but not a revolutionary idea now, which is to let them protect themselves. Don't strip them of their ability to protect themselves. Don't take away their ability to protect their children. Don't take away their ability to create laws that protect their police officers. Don't take away their ability in this law to protect their citizens—700,000 residents who do not have a voice in this body, 700,000 residents who are about to have a law that will better protect them overturned because of politics, because of opportunism, because of the big divisions in our country that tear our Nation apart.

But DC is united in its fight for self-determination, for representation, for safety, and security. Those are the ideals that started America, and this body shouldn't interrupt a city trying to live its American ideals that we take for granted but they, obviously, today, are still fighting for.

I yield the floor, and I give my apologies to the great Senator from Oregon.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. I thank my colleague, and I thank both of my colleagues for their very, very powerful remarks.

NOMINATION OF DANIEL I. WERFEL

Madam President, the Senate this afternoon is going to vote on the nomination of Mr. Danny Werfel to serve as the next Commissioner of the Internal Revenue Service.

I want to say that I believe Mr. Werfel is superbly qualified. He is a good-government nominee, and I urge my colleagues strongly to support him.

Mr. Werfel—and this is true of his professional life and at his hearing—has made it clear that he is going to make sure that the IRS does its job consistent with the law and that transparency will be a top priority for his service, which is focused on building trust.

This means a lot because Mr. Werfel has done that at the IRS before. He stepped up when President Obama asked him to serve as Acting Commissioner during a very challenging time a decade ago.

Now, the issues were different then. Danny Werfel came in after the public learned that the IRS had used some very sloppy methods of monitoring the political activities of tax-exempt groups. In the Finance Committee, particularly Chairman Hatch and myself, we did an extensive investigation, and we found that both left-leaning and right-leaning groups were affected.

While Mr. Werfel served in that acting role, he worked effectively with both sides of the Finance Committee. He helped right the ship and improve confidence in the IRS.

The late-Senator Hatch, who was certainly conservative but somebody who always valued fairness and professionalism, spoke to me several times and to our colleagues about his high regard for Danny Werfel. In my view, that is a big reason why Danny Werfel has bipartisan support today.

I have a few comments on the big initiatives he is going to lead when he is confirmed.

After a decade of Republican budget cuts, the Inflation Reduction Act finally gave the IRS the resources it needs to go after tax cheating by too many of the very wealthy and multinational corporations, and it is in a position to improve customer service for everybody else, the vast majority of Americans who follow the law.

I will start with customer service, where the IRS is making significant improvements. Let's go back a few years when the IRS was able to answer only 11 percent of the phone calls it was receiving. In 2022, it was 13 percent. This time last year, there was a backlog of 24 million unresolved tax returns. As of a few days ago, the IRS was answering 90 percent of phone calls. It has processed more than 99 percent of the returns filed so far this season. And the IRS has cut the backlog of individual returns by 92 percent.

Now, they have achieved that by spending about 1 percent of the IRA funding. In my view, that is a record that we ought to put a lot of focus on because, if it continues, it will be an

historic return on investment. We expect it to continue. We are counting on Mr. Werfel to maintain that progress.

The long-term initiative is also stepping up the fight against, unfortunately, the fact that there are too many of those wealthy tax cheats and scofflaw corporations that rip off American taxpayers too easily today, and the Republican budget cuts over the years resulted in a double standard in tax enforcement. The IRS' ability to go after sophisticated wealthy tax cheats, who are employing armies of lawyers and accountants, was severely limited for years. The burden of tax audits shifted far too heavily onto working people and the middle class.

The reason that was the case is that for working people in Wisconsin and Oregon—nurses and firefighters and teachers—the government has most of the information about their lives. So it is very straightforward, if there is something to question there.

The wealthy tax cheats use their accountants and the lawyers to pay taxes very differently. Billionaires tend, to a great extent, to pay little or nothing for years on end because they structure their affairs to knock out their annual income.

Democrats have made clear from the very beginning that this isn't about increasing audits of people with incomes under \$400,000. In fact, we wrote that limitation into the Inflation Reduction Act.

Republicans struck the language from the bill during the debate. Nevertheless, Secretary Yellen has ensured the Congress and everyone concerned know that the Treasury will stand by that commitment. The plan laying out how the IRA funding will be used is in the works.

I want to be clear this afternoon because I have been asked about this. Colleagues on the Finance Committee, of both political parties, are insisting that we get that report on how the funds are going to be used—that we get it soon.

Frankly, that is one of the reasons to support Danny Werfel this afternoon, because he is experienced in this deal. He stepped in for President Obama. We are convinced that he is going to follow that directive and focus on getting us the plan and ensure that the focus is on better service and on wealthy tax cheats and multinational corporations paying their fair share.

I think he is going to handle his position in a way that is transparent. He made it clear that he would be open to talking to Senators on both sides of the aisle and that he will strongly favor protections for confidentiality of taxpayer data. That is the kind of good-government approach that both sides of the aisle should support.

This is a highly qualified, highly experienced nominee. He is the right choice to lead the IRS. He has earned bipartisan support. A number of our colleagues, both in the committee and here on the floor on both sides of the

aisle, support him. I would just urge my colleagues, this afternoon—I think we will vote in a couple of hours—to strongly support his nomination.

REMEMBERING BILL AND DOTTIE SCHONELY

Madam President, I want to rise today on behalf of all the people that I have the honor to represent to honor the late Bill Schonely, the Portland Trail Blazers' radio voice for the better part of three decades, and his late wife Dottie.

Bill passed in January, leaving a timeless legacy for all of us Blazer fans in "Rip City," the name that Bill coined for my hometown.

Dottie passed last month, leaving her own legacy as an accomplished woman who radiated smarts and kindness to everybody she met in Oregon.

Bill and Dottie were the ultimate teammates, as the "First Couple of Rip City." So perhaps it is fitting they could not be separated for long.

In fact, when Bill and I spoke last, before his passing in January, he made sure to ask me if I was doing my level best to protect Social Security. I have kept the message on my phone with his resonating voice saying: RON, what are you doing to protect Social Security and the Gray Panthers? I am really concerned about it. And make sure you also do it for Dottie as well.

That will be on my phone forever.

Like storied broadcasters Johnny Most for the Boston Celtics fans or Chick Hearn for Los Angeles Lakers fans, my friend Bill was much more than an NBA play-by-play guy for us Trail Blazers fans in Portland and throughout Oregon. As the Blazers' first broadcaster, starting with the team's inaugural season in 1970—that was a world long before ESPN or even before the team's games aired on local TV—Bill became the soundtrack for generations of Portland fans. He connected our State's first big-league franchise with Oregonians in every nook and cranny of Oregon.

I have logged lots of miles getting around Oregon for 1,040 open-to-all townhall meetings. In fact, I have got two more scheduled this weekend in Jefferson and Deschutes Counties in Central Oregon. But I bet Bill covered just as many miles as the Blazers' ambassador in every part of Oregon.

I can't tell you how many times I would show up at a radio station in a small Oregon town—you know, there are lots of those kinds of towns in Wisconsin—and I would see a photo of Bill there, from back in the day, when he was on a local golf course or some local community function. And any elected official in Oregon will tell you how fortunate we were that Bill Schonely never ran against any of us.

In addition to coining the phrase "Rip City," which is forever tied with my hometown, Bill had an expansive basketball lexicon in his unofficial role as professor of basketball English for Blazers fans.

Unlike me, he had a baritone voice, and he taught all of us how rebounders

"climbed the golden ladder" and how point guards dribbled "lickety brindle up the middle." As a former player myself, I always nodded my head in agreement whenever Bill would intone, pausing theatrically with each word, "You've got to make your free throws."

So as Rip City prepares to say goodbye to Bill and Dottie at a public memorial service in Portland, in which I will be at on Monday the 13th, I will close with this:

Oregon is said to have "Seven Wonders," including Mount Hood and Crater Lake. In my scorebook and the scorebooks of Blazer fans, "The Schonz" and Dottie are our State's "Eighth Wonder."

So today, on behalf of all Oregonians, I extend my condolences to all Bill and Dottie's loved ones. I will always remember both with a smile and be forever grateful that they leave so many wonderful memories as part of their unforgettable legacy for our community.

On behalf of all Oregonians, today, I close by simply saying: Thank you, Bill and Dottie Schonely.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BENNET. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. BENNET. Madam President, I wanted to come down here because a single Senator in this Chamber, a colleague from Alabama, has put a blanket hold on every pending nominee and promotion of flag officers at the Department of Defense.

As far as we can tell—and this might be the intention of the Senator from Alabama; I don't know whether he knows this or not—there is no precedent for what the Senator from Alabama is doing. There is no precedent for what he has done. It has never been done, stopping the U.S. Senate from taking up promotions for uniformed military officers. These are promotions that happen to people as a group. These are flag officers at the Department of Defense that we have to ratify here in the Senate.

And we asked the Senate Armed Services—I couldn't believe it when I heard it. I couldn't believe it. But we asked the Senate Armed Services Committee if this had ever happened in the history of America, the history of the Senate; and the answer was, they have no record of that ever happening before.

And it is happening at an incredibly unusual and difficult time in the world's history with the biggest land war in Europe since the Second World War, China's saber-rattling in the Pa-

cific. We just had an hours-long open session of the Intelligence Committee to hear the report from the head of the FBI, the head of the CIA, the head of the NSA, the head of the Defense Intelligence Agency. All of these folks were coming together to say: This is what the threat looks like. This is the global threat that America faces—a geopolitical landscape more unsettled than at any point in my lifetime, Madam President.

My understanding is that the Senator from Alabama has placed this unprecedented blanket hold because he objects to the Department of Defense's new policies to help our servicemembers access reproductive care. And I will have more to say about that in a minute; but I don't think I should wait any longer to advance these personnel. We should get this done today.

Therefore, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session to consider the following nomination en bloc: Calendar Nos. 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52; that the nominations be confirmed en bloc; that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order to any of the nominations; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action, and the Senate then resume legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The senior Senator from Alabama.

Mr. TUBERVILLE. Reserving the right to object.

The Senator from Colorado may have good intentions, Madam President, but he is wrong on the facts.

I am holding the DOD nominations because the Secretary of Defense is trying to push through a massive expansion of taxpayer-subsidized abortions without going through this body, without going through Congress.

Three months ago, I informed Secretary Austin that if he tried to turn the DOD into an abortion travel agency, I would place a hold on all civilian flag and general officer nominees. Other than a couple of calls to my staff to ask whether I was serious, the DOD leadership has yet to call me directly and justify this action. In fact, they have not explained this decision to Congress despite multiple letters, more than a dozen from my colleagues on the Armed Services Committee.

Secretary Austin's new abortion policy is immoral and, arguably, illegal. If he wants to change the law, he needs to go through Congress.

The DOD refused to answer questions or justify this policy for months last year. When they finally answered our questions after another nominee hold, the policy was exposed for what it really is: nothing but a political charade to appease the left. These holds have no real impact on military readiness or operation. The military wasting time and resources to coordinate abortion trips hurts readiness, not the Senate using regular order to vote on nominees.

If my colleague cared about military readiness, maybe we would go after more of the ridiculous policies that have led to our lowest—our lowest—recruiting numbers in decades. But my hold does send a message that the Secretary is not—and I repeat—not above the law, and he cannot ignore lawmakers who are demanding his organization abide by the law.

I object, and I will continue to object to any nominees as long as this illegal new abortion policy is in place. I am holding the military accountable. Others are holding our national security hostage by forcing their agenda where it doesn't belong.

Americans want a military focused on a national defense. And that is what I am fighting for. For these reasons, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The senior Senator from Colorado.

Mr. BENNET. Madam President, I appreciate the words of the Senator from Alabama and his conviction. I will say he said I am mistaken on the facts.

I think one thing you didn't hear was any dispute at all that this is the first time in American history that a U.S. Senator has held up the promotion of flag officers—the first time. It is the first time in American history that any of the more than 2,000 people that have served in this body—but less than 3,000 people—have seen fit to hold up the promotions of people at DOD. That is not a fact that is in dispute, Madam President, as we sit here today on the floor.

You know, I have spent a lot of time when I come down to this floor—and I am on the floor listening to people's speeches, or I am thinking about my own—thinking about the history of America. And broadly speaking—it has not always been true at every moment or at every juncture—but broadly speaking, the American story has been a story of expanding freedoms and expanding opportunity for the American people. It is the story of one generation after another putting their shoulder to the wheel to make our country more democratic, more fair, and more free.

It can be easy, when you are on this floor, to think about those victories as ancient history, as old as the marble in this Chamber. But it was only 100 years ago, our grandmothers' generation—our grandmothers' generation—when women in America didn't have the right to vote. That is just 100 years ago. It took 100 years for the people that were fighting for women to have the self-evident right to vote to vote, and they didn't get it until 100 years after they fought. And it was only 100 years ago that they got it.

It was only when I was born in the middle of the 1960s that we attempted, finally—finally—after the Civil War in the United States, after Reconstruction and then the redemption that came after that, after the Jim Crow

laws and the redlining that had happened in the United States of America—it was only after that that we finally tried to secure the rights of African-American citizens to vote, a promise that had been made after the Civil War was over and never fulfilled. I would argue it hasn't been fulfilled to this day.

By the way, when I was born in 1964—I was at the African American Museum the day before I got sworn into this body, this time with my family, and I said to one of my nephews—we were walking through the slavery exhibit—I said, I was born in 1964, which, to him, admittedly, that seemed like ancient history. But the year I was born was just 100 years since the people in this country still enslaved human beings. Just two short lifetimes divided when I was born from when we still enslaved human beings.

It was even more recent in our country's history—just 50 years ago, Madam President—before we secured the constitutional right to an abortion in *Roe v. Wade*, putting an end to the days when women in this Nation—when our mothers and our grandmothers—were forced into back-alley abortions in the United States of America, forced to carry pregnancies to term, and forced to live without any freedom to chart their own course about their lives or their families' lives. That was just 50 years ago when the Court in *Roe v. Wade* said there is a constitutional right at stake here; there is a constitutional right that we are going to protect here.

And in all of these cases, in my judgment, our fellow citizens have sought to broaden the horizon of freedom and equality in America. And our progress has never been in a straight line. The pages here should know that. We have always been in a battle. We have always been in a battle in this country between the highest ideals that have ever been expressed on the page by human hand, the words in the Constitution of the United States and the worst impulses in human history—the worst impulses in human history—in our case: human slavery and the genocide that was perpetrated on the Native American population that was here at a time when those incredible words were etched into the Constitution that are etched all over the walls of this beautiful building—a building, by the way, that itself, I say to the pages that are here, was built by enslaved human beings. And we are in that fight today.

Today, we face a decades-long campaign that stretches back, at least, to when Ronald Reagan was elected President. It is a battle that has been mostly invisible until recently to the American people, even though it has transformed American life. While that campaign had many objectives over its 40 or 50 years or so—those four decades—one of those objectives was to confirm a majority of Justices on the Supreme Court who subscribed to a radical con-

stitutional interpretation called originalism, a legal document that was invented in the 1970s.

My colleague from Louisiana is here today. He is a distinguished lawyer. He might disagree with some things that I would say, but I was there at the origin of originalism. I was a lawyer trained a decade or so after this was something that was perpetrated by the Federalist Society and Anthony Scalia and the law-of-economics guys and Mark Feldstein and all these folks, as part of what they were trying to do with the Reagan revolution. And a huge part of that was originalism. It is the most amazing name. It is the most amazing name, I think, in political history. I don't think there has been greater branding in the history of mankind than "originalism" because it makes you think immediately: That is what the Founding Fathers must have set. It is their original intent, as if that could be divined across the decades, across the centuries, or across the ages, as if they even agreed with each other.

You don't have to go to a musical like "Hamilton" to see the disagreements that these people had with one another. That is the beauty of the founding of our Republic, which is to see the disagreements that they had with each other and the way they sorted through them and the compromises they made as a result of this disagreement—some of them, American tragedies that we live with to this day.

But they called it original. I just want the pages to know this and the law students that are out there today that might want to dispute this to just look up the history. There is a beginning of this. There is a beginning of this, and it does not start with John Marshall. It does not start with George Washington or Thomas Jefferson, who himself—Jefferson would be absolutely shocked to believe that there are people in the 21st century who think that we should be dictated to by the hand of the 18th century or the 17th century. There should be a revolution even less than in every generation.

If you had told me—I mean, we all knew about originalism when I was in law school. We certainly did. I did. We had professors who subscribed to it. Certainly, there are political people who subscribe to it. But if you had told me when I was in law school that I would live to see the day when a majority of the U.S. Supreme Court would subscribe to the originalist position of the Federalist Society, I would have said: That is not believable. That is preposterous.

I am not saying there wouldn't be people who wouldn't have fundamental constitutional disagreements with me on all kinds of things, but the idea that you would have a Court that would say originalism is where it is at? But that is what has happened, and it has been a 40-year campaign to do it.

I actually had a moment on the floor of this Senate once when I congratulated the leader of the Republican

Party for having achieved his dream, having achieved his vision. I wasn't congratulating him because I agreed with him or that I felt positive about what he had done, but he had set out to carry that water, and he did it decade after decade after decade.

I said earlier that this wasn't really noticed by the American people, this battle. In many ways, it wasn't until 8 months ago. Eight months ago, we saw that majority take its most radical decision yet when it overturned *Roe v. Wade*, stripping the American people of a fundamental constitutional right to make their own reproductive choices—a right that Justices appointed by Republican and Democratic Presidents had upheld for half a century, for 50 years.

I have a colleague in this Chamber whom I love named JON TESTER, who is from Montana. He is a farmer. He is one of the last farmers in this place. He said to me—this was even before this happened—he said to me: My daughter is having to fight for things her mother never had to fight for because her grandmother won these freedoms. Her grandmother won these rights, and she won these freedoms and these rights when *Roe v. Wade* was decided half a century ago.

I read on the way home to Colorado—well, I guess in honesty, I read the decision—I am sure my friend from Louisiana read it earlier, too, when it got leaked by the Supreme Court somehow—something that should have never happened—something that should have never happened. That is when I first read Justice Alito's opinion. I had a chance, again, to read it on the plane back to Colorado, and I was hoping that it would be different because the opinion that I had first read as a draft opinion just dripped—dripped—with a cavalier dismissal of the right that it had destroyed. And when I reread it on the airplane, that is what I saw again.

Justice Alito's opinion doesn't even have the courage to grapple with the fundamental nature of the right it was stripping the American people of. It didn't contend with the simplest questions like what it would mean for millions of Americans, including for millions of American women like my three daughters.

Justices Breyer, Kagan, and Sotomayor expressed this in their dissent. They wrote:

[The majority opinion lacked] any serious discussion of how its ruling will affect women. . . . It reveals how little it knows or cares about women's lives or about the suffering its decision will cause.

That is a quote of the dissent in that opinion.

Instead of grappling with the consequences of his ruling—which would have been, I am sure, painful even for Justice Alito to deal with, just as it is for women all over this country and their families to deal with the aftermath of this decision every single day since it has been rendered—Justice

Alito essentially wrote that if it wasn't a right in 1868, it is not a right today.

I mean, you have to give him credit. That is originalism, although he is not going back to the Constitution; he is going back to the 14th Amendment. If it wasn't a right in 1868, it is not a right today.

We ratified the 14th Amendment in 1868. That is the depth of the analysis in that opinion, which, if you were guided only by originalist ideology, I suppose that would be what you would say. The dissenting Justice pointed out that Justice Alito completely ignored that the men who ratified the 14th Amendment in 1868—and all of them, obviously, were men—did not perceive women as equals, did not recognize women's rights.

Quoting them now in the dissent:

When the majority says we must read our foundational charter as viewed at the time of ratification . . . it consigns women to second-class citizenship.

Of course it does. Women had no right to vote. Black Americans had no right to vote. The dissent continued:

Because laws in 1868 deprived women of any control over their bodies, the majority approves States doing so today. Because those laws prevented women from charting the course of their own lives, the majority says States can do the same again.

And that is exactly what we have seen with one State after another treating Dobbs as a green light to obliterate access to reproductive care for millions of American women and families. Many of us have spoken about how the ruling has harmed the privacy, the health, the freedom of our fellow Americans, and all of those are important.

Let me say also, this is a difficult issue in my State. I want the Senator from Alabama to know that and everybody to know that. It is a difficult issue for all of the families across America. It is difficult for anybody who has been through this. And I am certainly not cavalier about how difficult this decision is and the fact that different people have different points of view, different people have different religious perspectives, different people come from different parts of the country.

I thought about these things a lot over the years, and my conclusion is that it is best to leave this decision in the hands of a woman and her—well, whomever she chooses to consult—her doctor, her family. That is my opinion. I respect the opinion of other people who disagree about that. I realize that this is a heartfelt decision.

But there is a reason why people have been out on this floor and other places talking about the effect on freedom, the effect on the right to privacy, the effect on the health of our fellow citizens because it has an unbelievable effect on all of those dimensions.

But I don't think we have focused nearly enough on how the ruling will harm our national security, and that is what brings us here today. That is what brings us here today at this un-

precedented moment, when a Member of this body, for the first time in American history, has said: No, I am not going to let a single person go through. I am not going to let any of these flag officers go through because I am upset with the policy that the DOD has pursued, that the DOD is pursuing a massive subsidy on abortion here, the abortion travel agency that the DOD has become. And because I don't like that—I am not accepting those characterizations of what the DOD is becoming—but because I don't like that, I am going to hold hostage the promotion of the flag officers at the Department of Defense.

Over a million men and women serve in our Armed Forces, supported by over 700,000 civilians in the Department of Defense. These are obviously moms and dads, sons and daughters who volunteer to risk their lives to protect ours. But when our men and women in uniform volunteer to serve, when they heed the call and they say, "Sign me up," they don't get to decide where they serve. When our men and women in uniform volunteer to serve, they don't get to decide where they are going to serve; the Pentagon decides that. You can't sign up and say: Well, I would like to be in Colorado, or, well, I would like to be in Alabama, or I would like to be in a State where my reproductive healthcare is going to be covered or a State where it is not.

Before Dobbs was decided, our troops had at least some assurance that wherever the Pentagon sent them, they would have minimal access to reproductive care as a protected constitutional right. They knew that for 50 years—for 50 years, for 50 years—no matter where they served. That is no longer true. The Supreme Court stripped that right away, again, without even bothering to consider what it would mean for our troops based in States with no access to reproductive care. Justice Alito doesn't deal with that in his decision.

After Dobbs, one of the first calls I received was from a woman who once served as a senior officer in the Air Force. She immediately grasped how Dobbs is going to affect our military readiness. And that is what this is about—our military readiness. She understood, as, I would say, thousands of women in this country understood, how disruptive it is to force women in uniform to travel from their duty station to access care, to say nothing of the cost to her privacy when every single person in her unit finds out about it, knows about it, unlike any other medical procedure that we give people leave for, that people can get paid travel for. The privacy issues here are seismic, and the military readiness issues as a result are seismic, too.

Women are the fastest growing part of our military. They are about a fifth of our total force and over one-third of our civilian workforce. It is not hard to see why they might think twice before enlisting if they know they are going

to be stationed somewhere that doesn't respect their reproductive freedom.

(Senator MURPHY assumed the Chair.)

The Senator from Alabama talked about how the DOD is having the worst recruiting they have had for generations. She is right. That is true. It is hard to see how this is going to help.

You don't have to take my word for it. A recent study from RAND concluded that Dobbs could increase attrition, decrease readiness, and hurt national security. And that is after the Pentagon had its worst recruiting season, as the Senator from Alabama suggested, since the Vietnam war.

In an attempt to deal with these issues 2 weeks ago, the Pentagon announced three new policies, and here is what they were.

By the way, I apologize to my colleagues who are here because I know you are here to give this other speech. I delayed for 24 hours or more, so I am going to just continue, and I will beg your forgiveness.

But these are the three things that have brought the Senate to a halt. These are the three things that have created an unprecedented objection to flag officers of the Department of Defense being approved in the common way that they have been approved in this body for 230 years.

The first of these policies authorizes travel allowances for servicemembers to access reproductive care if it is unavailable at their duty stations. That is important because they may not be able to afford to travel, which is why we pay for other procedures, like LASIK eye surgery or to remove a bunion, none of which seem to have gotten the objection of anybody in this body.

The second allows servicemembers to take absences without leave to access reproductive care. This recognizes, I think, the difficult choice a woman has to make in incredibly, profoundly challenging circumstances. LASIK surgeries aren't banned in Alabama or Connecticut.

The last policy extends the time before servicemembers have to tell their commanding officers about a pregnancy. It gives them just a little bit more time to deal with the shock that can come when somebody has an unexpected pregnancy and is trying to make a decision about what to do. This says that rather than get you in a position where you might find yourself feeling like you can't tell your superior officer the truth, this says take a little bit more time so you can think of it.

That is what these three provisions do, these guidelines do, these rules do, about giving the women in uniform the time and the privacy to decide if they want to carry a pregnancy to term or not—a decision that anybody on this floor, no matter what they think about this, surely can understand has become more complicated in the wake of Dobbs.

So I applaud the Secretary of Defense, Secretary Austin, for taking

these steps to protect our soldiers, our sailors, and our marines. He is in a difficult position. It is hard to do because, you know, I don't think many people were expecting that this would actually happen, and yet it has.

Instead of welcoming this leadership from the Secretary of Defense, some of my Republican colleagues have attacked these proposals. They call them—I am now not quoting the Senator from Alabama; I am quoting others who have written about this. They have called them “disgusting.” They have called them “heavy-handed.” They have called them “disastrous.”

I could be wrong—I have certainly been wrong before—but I don't think the American people would consider it disgusting or disastrous that women in uniform don't have to dig into their own paycheck and use their limited leave to seek care that is unavailable because of where our government required them to deploy. I think fundamental fairness would say that is a reasonable reaction to the disruption that has been caused by the Supreme Court.

Now I am quoting the senior Senator from Alabama when I say:

The Secretary of Defense is following through with his radical plan to facilitate thousands of abortions a year with taxpayer dollars, so I will follow through with my plan to hold all DOD civilian, flag, and general officer nominations that come before the U.S. Senate.

OK. Let's just hold up here for one second. Thousands. The Senator was down here the other day saying this is not a readiness problem because it is only 20 abortions that DOD paid for last year. Well, I don't know the facts of every one of those abortions. I do know the facts of the DOD policy with respect to abortion on paying for it, and that is in cases where there has been rape, incest, or the life of the mother is at stake. And maybe that is what those 20 were.

But the Senator from Alabama himself said that what we are talking about here in the context of the rule are what he calls thousands and thousands of abortions that he is saying are subsidized by DOD because the DOD is willing to pay for the travel of women to go from a State that has banned abortion to a State that hasn't. I don't see how—how could that not be a matter of readiness when you are talking about thousands of people?

The Senator from Alabama said:

The American people want a military focused on national defense, not facilitating a progressive political agenda.

I could not agree more—could not agree more—with the Senator from Alabama. The American people want a military focused on national defense, and for that reason, that is why I find it so hard to imagine that the American people would tolerate any Senator holding up critical national security personnel to impose their ideology.

The Senator from Alabama correctly says that abortion is illegal in his State. I read the polling data that

shows that 55 percent of Alabamians actually support a woman's right to choose. But that is neither here nor there. In terms of the law in Alabama, the Senator from Alabama is right about that—abortion is banned there. In Alabama, abortion is banned at any stage of a pregnancy. It has no exceptions for rape or for incest.

Under Alabama law, doctors can face up to 99 years in jail if they perform an abortion. Last month, an Alabama State legislator announced a bill to treat abortion as murder. The State's attorney general suggested using a chemical endangerment law—a law designed to protect kids from methamphetamine—to prosecute a woman for taking a pill to terminate her pregnancy. That is the law. That is the debate that is going on in Alabama.

I recognize that Alabama has made certain decisions about this issue that are different from the ones that Colorado has made. We were the first State in America to decriminalize abortion in 1967. That was the State of Colorado, a Western State, 5 years before *Roe v. Wade* was ever decided.

In Colorado, we believe these decisions belong between a woman and her family and her doctor, and we don't accept that the government should impose itself on that private decision. And of course, that is not just what I believe; it is not just what Colorado believes; that is what the large majority of the American people believe. That is what the American people believe.

I acknowledge that Alabama has made a different choice, but what I can't accept is that its Senator would impose that choice on every woman and family in our armed services who happened to be stationed in his State or any State that doesn't protect access to reproductive care, because it is not just Alabama. It is not just Alabama. Eighteen States have banned abortion. Nine of them—nine of them—have no exceptions for rape or incest.

Many States have only begun their war on a woman's right to choose. Just yesterday in Florida, which is home to 22 military bases—22 bases, where men and women in the United States who signed up to fight or to join our military have no choice about where they serve. Governor DeSantis committed just yesterday to sign a 6-week abortion ban. He may be unaware—I haven't talked to him about it. I don't know. He might be unaware that one in three women doesn't even know that she is pregnant until around 6 weeks—or maybe he does know that. I don't know which would be worse.

Texas is posting \$10,000 bounties to any resident who successfully sues a doctor or nurse for performing an abortion after 6 weeks or even someone who just drives their friend or relative or neighbor to have a procedure—a procedure that for the last 50 years—until this radical, originalist majority came into the Court—for the last 50 years, for almost my entire lifetime, has been a constitutionally protected right in this country.

All of us who are in this Chamber can remember how, in the aftermath of Dobbs, State legislators all around the country wrote laws restricting the freedom of female citizens to travel from States like Texas or Alabama that had banned abortions to States like Colorado that had ratified a woman's right to choose.

Now we have Senators here who aren't content to merely deprive servicewomen of reproductive care if they are based in a State where abortion has been banned; they want to make it even harder to travel to another State to avail themselves of that care.

From the vantage point of my daughters, the nearly 6 million people who live in Colorado, and the vast majority of Americans who support a woman's right to choose, I think there is a real question here about whose position is radical.

When the military pays for servicemen to travel from one State to another if they need LASIK eye surgery or a sinus procedure or to remove a bunion on their foot, is it really radical to imagine that servicewomen should have the right to travel—to have the price of that travel defrayed so they can get reproductive care?

That is just the debate we are having. That says nothing about why we are actually here today, which is the vehicle that the Senator from Alabama is using to delay the vote of every pending nominee and promotion at the Department of Defense at a moment when we have the biggest land war in Europe since the Second World War and China saber-rattling in the Pacific.

If you told most Americans that a single Senator in this place was delaying every nomination and promotion at the DOD, all for the privilege of making it harder for servicewomen to travel for reproductive care or take leave for that care or shorten the time a woman has to make a choice about her reproductive health before she has to tell her commanding officer—and those are the facts of what these rules do. If you told Americans that is what was happening on the floor of the Senate, I don't think they would believe it. I don't think they would accept it. And maybe that is the reason why it has never happened. Coloradans wouldn't accept it.

Like the Senator from Alabama, we in Colorado are honored to host a strong military presence in our State, from the U.S. Air Force Academy to Fort Carson, to Schriever, to Peterson, and to Buckley and Space Command, and we are honored to protect the reproductive care for the men and women who protect us.

In the case of Space Command, we have a live example, I am sad to say, of how the Supreme Court's decision could harm our national security. I will not go through the whole story today. I will spare the Senators from Alabama and Louisiana and everybody else who is here this painful and, as I describe it, saddest story I know.

Here is the essential point: In the waning days of the last administration—I think Donald Trump, President Trump, had 9 days left—our top generals recommended Colorado as the top choice for Space Command's permanent headquarters, but President Trump overruled them and said it should go to Alabama. He later went on the radio and said: They all were against me. They all said it ought to go to Colorado, but I overruled them, and I said it should go to Alabama.

Now, look, I do not think that is how we should be making basing decisions in this Nation. Every single person who has looked at this Space Command issue knows what the generals recommended, and they know they were overruled by the President of the United States for his own political purposes. We need to make these decisions according to the national security interests of the United States, not in the political interests of a President.

That is why, over and over, I called on the Biden administration to restore integrity to this process and honor the generals' original recommendation. They should have made that decision 2 years ago after President Trump made this decision, in the last few days of his administration, overruling these generals, the experts who know where Space Command should be.

But my specific issue with Space Command has led me to a much broader concern as I have studied this issue. In the wake of Dobbs, we literally have no policy to account for the harm of moving a base from a State that protects access to reproductive care, like Colorado, to a State that does not, like Alabama. We are now living in a world where the Pentagon makes basing decisions according to criteria like the number of parking spaces or the quality of schools or the availability of childcare. All of those are relevant decisions, important decisions, questions to ask. But one question they are not asking is about basic reproductive healthcare in a country where it has been legal, where it has been a fundamental constitutional right for the last 50 years, that the majority of the American people and the majority of the people in Alabama supports.

They are not asking whether a State prosecutes women who seek an abortion or imprisons doctors for 99 years for performing abortions or turns residents into bounty hunters against women. It is ridiculous that they would be counting parking spaces and not reflecting on what this world looks like for the people in our armed services, especially women and their families, post Dobbs. I can't agree that the Pentagon should care about how much it costs to house a family when it makes basing decisions but not whether the family has the freedom to plan its future.

The Supreme Court, because of its ideology, may not have had the courage to grapple with the consequences of its ruling on our men and women in

uniform and on our national security, but that doesn't give us the ability or give the Department of Defense reason to shirk its responsibility. We have to stand on the side of expanding rights and expanding opportunity for Americans, not restricting them.

So, today, I am calling on the Pentagon to codify the policies it announced last month and develop a new framework that accounts for access to reproductive care in its basing and its personnel decisions.

I call upon my colleague from Alabama to lift his holds so the Senate can advance these national security personnel, because if our men and women in uniform can spend every day defending our freedom, surely, we can defend theirs.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. TUBERVILLE. Mr. President, I think we got a little offtrack here.

In getting back to the objection a little bit, I don't think there is anybody here who said it has anything to do with doing away with abortion. The Department of Defense has had, for years, a policy about abortion in the military. My problem is, they have changed it. And the last time I looked, the people who make the laws are not on the Supreme Court and not in the Pentagon—it is this place right here. We make the laws. They have done abortions for years in the military for rape, incest, and harm to the mom—through health. They want to change this to where a third party has said thousands and thousands would start getting abortions and not just military personnel but also their dependents.

This is about who is paying for this. The American taxpayers shouldn't be told they have to pay for abortions. That is not the way it is written. The military should not be paying for abortions. So, as we got offtrack there a little bit about what we were talking about, we are talking about a new policy based not on facts but on conjecture from the Department of Defense that they are going to do it on their own without coming through this body.

Now a little bit about SPACECOM, as the good Senator from Colorado brought up.

You know, it is unfortunate that Members from States that weren't really even running for SPACECOM headquarters are trying to tack on completely unrelated political issues to a fact-based decision. SPACECOM's and the DOD's abortion policies have nothing to do with each other. I don't recall abortion being part of the Air Force's selection process a couple of years ago when they called me and said: Coach, we are going to put SPACECOM in Huntsville, AL. The decision to put SPACECOM in Huntsville was based on facts and facts alone and evidence of what was best for the military and for our country and our national defense. That is the reason they chose it. That decision was then recon-

firmed by multiple independent studies over the last couple of years.

The DOD's inspector general and the GAO confirmed that Huntsville was the No. 1 location for SPACECOM based on things like workforce, existing infrastructure, education, and the cost of living. Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville is, far and away, the best place for SPACECOM. This is not my opinion. It is fact. It is fact from several studies. Attempts to change that with progressive talking points are shameful and purely political. It is really a shame.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, first of all, I would say, with respect to my colleague from Alabama, I appreciate his arguments here.

He first says that he clearly doesn't have the ability to do this; that, somehow, this is up to Congress to pass a law to make sure that servicemembers who need to travel for reproductive healthcare have it paid for them, not the abortion, by the way, which is what the Senator from Alabama said—that is inaccurate—but the travel is his argument.

The reality is that the DOD, it is clear, can pay for servicemembers' travel for LASIK eye surgery, but current law doesn't say that. It can pay to have a bunion removed, but current law doesn't say that either. All of that has happened without complaint from this body because it makes sense that the DOD has the discretion to provide the care it believes its servicemembers require. And they are making those regulations as part of the law that they have been granted from our branch of government to make sure they care for our servicemembers. I think that is point 1.

Point 2, the Senator from Alabama talked about, you know, this being about who is paying for abortion. This is not about who is paying for abortion. This is about those three changes to the law I mentioned earlier. I won't go into them because I know my colleagues are going to lose their minds over my staying here. But those are the three things. One is travel. One is, you know, being able to take a little bit of a longer time to talk to your supervisor, and those kinds of things. So it is not about paying for abortions.

Although, I will say that the Senator from Alabama has another piece of legislation that he has introduced that objects not to the DOD but to the VA. He says this is radical. The VA has said: We have noticed that our policies that allow us to pay for abortion when the life of the mother is at stake don't also include exceptions for rape and incest, and we are going to add those exceptions for rape and incest. The Senator from Alabama has brought that to the floor and said he wants to have a vote.

I want to have a vote on that too. I can't wait to see how every single Senator in this Chamber stands on the Senator from Alabama's position that

having the VA add cases of rape and incest to the exception to allow it to pay for abortion is not somehow abortion-on-demand or abortion—as some people say, abortion after people have already had the child but is simply adding two things that probably 80 percent of the American people agree with.

On the last point, on Space Command's being decided on the facts, let me tell you something. Here are the facts as I understand them: The generals said they thought Space Command should stay in Colorado. The generals and the Secretary of the Air Force went to the White House with the recommendation of Colorado. The President of the United States, Donald Trump, overturned that recommendation on their advice. He went on the radio—the Rick & Bubba Show, I think it is called—in Alabama, where he said: Everybody was for Colorado, and everybody was against me on Alabama, but I made the decision to send it to Alabama.

Those are the facts on Space Command. And it is not off-topic. You know, it is not off-topic. That was a political decision that should never have been made. If the politics had not entered into that decision, the generals would have gotten their way, and Space Command would be in Colorado, and we wouldn't be having the conversation we are having today because no one in Colorado would be having their abortion rights stripped from them and being sent to another State that has banned abortion, where doctors can go to jail for 99 years because they perform an abortion, where laws that are meant to bring down folks who traffic in methamphetamine are being threatened to be used against women who use a chemical version of abortion.

This is not a complaint I have with the Senator from Alabama. This is my complaint with the White House. You should have dealt with this 2 years ago. And now I hope this administration will deal with, in the wake of Dobbs, this daily gray area that is tearing at the emotions and the well-being of members of our Armed Forces, who don't get to decide where they are stationed.

Alabama can have whatever law it wants. That is not up for me to decide. I respect that there are differences in this country, but people in this body have a duty and a responsibility to the men and women of the armed services, and we have a duty and responsibility to fulfill our duty and responsibility, which is not to hold up the promotion of flag officers at the Department of Defense because I have a position that is different from what others may think. That is what I think.

I yield to the Senator from Louisiana.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I want to thank my colleagues from Colorado and Alabama for a very interesting and

robust debate, but I would like to change the subject slightly.

GERMANY

Mr. President, Germany and America are dear friends, and friends tell each other the truth.

On the first anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said that Germany plans to continue supporting Ukraine "as strongly and as long [as possible and] as necessary."

I regret to observe that based on where we are today, that would certainly be a change of pace. By all measures, Germany's so-called strong support is more lamb than lion. The numbers don't lie. Germany's current spending to help Ukraine by share of gross domestic product—if you compare the spending of one country to another, it is not fair to use raw numbers because some countries are wealthier than others. So if you look at the current spending by our friends in Germany to help Ukraine, by share of gross domestic product, Germany wouldn't even be in the top 10 nations in terms of financial support for Ukraine. And those are just the numbers.

Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and the United Kingdom have all outspent Germany by share of gross domestic product. Our neighbors in Canada have outspent Germany, too, both in raw dollars and by share of GDP. And the same is certainly true of the American people. The American people have spent roughly double—double—what our friends in Germany have spent in Ukraine, fighting for freedom, by share of domestic gross product.

With an entire ocean and most of Europe between America and Ukraine, Americans are wondering why the United States and Canada have dug deeper to deter Russian aggression than Germany has. That is a fair question.

Germany, as we all know—and I am very proud of them for this—is the economic leader of Europe. Germany has the fourth largest economy in the world. Germany has the fourth largest economy in the world. But the fact is—friends tell friends the truth—that Germany is failing to pull its weight in Ukraine. And if we look back on the past year, it is very clear that Germany's support of Ukraine has been heavy on words and short on action. And I hate to have to say that.

Somehow, Germany's leadership has lost the urgency it had when Putin began his march into Ukraine. At that time, if we think back a year, Germany could not have been in a more vulnerable position. The Bundeswehr, Germany's armed forces, were dilapidated.

At the end of the Cold War, Germany had nearly 500,000 soldiers. Roughly 3 percent of its spending by GDP was allocated to Germany's defense. When Putin invaded Ukraine, Germany's military was roughly one-third of that size, about 183,000 soldiers, and spending on defense by our friends in Ger-

many had plummeted to 1.3 percent of gross domestic product.

Its airplanes couldn't fly. Its tanks were unusable. Its bloated military bureaucracy appeared to be the only thing the German Government properly maintained.

Were it not for the United States of America, Putin would be in Paris. But we stepped up, and so did others. God bless them.

It wasn't just Germany's armed forces that were unprepared for Putin's invasion. Germany's energy grid relied on Russian natural gas, as we both know, Mr. President. For several decades—this goes back many years—Germany became increasingly reliant on Russia's energy. Germany appeared to believe, foolishly—"naively," maybe, is a better word—that its energy trade with Putin would yield friendship. Instead, it yielded dependency.

In this trade, these weren't some cupcakes that friends were exchanging as neighbors. What we are talking about here is the very security and dependability of the fourth largest economy in the history of the world—or, rather, in the current history of the world—and its power grid. Germany placed its power grid in Russia's hands, and Putin knew that. Putin knew that Germany's energy dependency would make it a lot easier for him to march into Ukraine, not harder. Everybody knew it.

Now, with winter coming, I want to give our friends in Germany a lot of credit. Germany did have some urgency in correcting its energy. Germany built LNG terminals to expand its gas reserves. The United States sold energy to our friends in Germany. We were happy to do it.

Germany expanded its renewable energy efforts. It still has not embraced nuclear energy, as I hope it will, but Germany did expand its renewable energy efforts. It has now as a goal reaching 80 percent renewable by 2030, and that is good.

But there is just one problem. Even that effort could leave Germany exposed to reliance on an adversary because, according to a report from the International Energy Agency, China is on track to be responsible for 95 percent of the global production of solar panels. China currently makes up 80 percent of the world's supply. If it is not careful, Germany may realize the new boss is the same as the old boss.

But that same urgency that our friends in Germany showed to address the power grid is nowhere to be found on the military front—nowhere.

In the wake of Putin's rapid invasion, Chancellor Scholz made big promises. He called it a turning point in German history. He said defense spending is going to increase to 2 percent. He said he was going to create an extra military fund valued at \$107 billion. He said his military was going to increase by 30,000 women and men by 2025. I regret that Germany's urgency seems to have disappeared.

Military spending has barely nudged above 1.5 percent, still short of the 2

percent commitment that Germany made to NATO.

Germany did purchase 35 American F-35 fighter jets. Do you know when they are going to be ready? 2027.

Experts much smarter than me doubt that Germany will reach its 30,000 promised new troops by the date that it said it would.

The truth is—the cold, hard, unvarnished truth—since the invasion began, Germany has been slow to provide weapons to Ukraine. Friends tell friends the truth. Germany only agreed to send its Leopard 2 tanks after weeks of haggling with President Biden, during which Chancellor Scholz refused to send the tanks—his own tanks—unless the United States also committed to sending its M1 Abrams, after all we had done and will continue to do. Even when offering up so little, the German Chancellor demanded the United States of America do more.

One year ago, as Putin's invasion commenced, Chancellor Scholz vowed to “invest much more in the security of our country” and “guarantee a secure energy supply.”

On the energy front, Putin turned off the gas, and our friends in Germany, demonstrating extraordinary ingenuity, managed to pivot. But on the defense front, Germany has failed to show any serious steps to grow its military. The fourth largest economy in the world has fallen short in its support for Ukraine.

Promises to recruit more troops, spend more money, and reinvigorate its Bundeswehr—they are nice, but those are only words. Germany seems to acknowledge that the barbarians are at the gate. I don't know how it could be any clearer. So why aren't our friends in Germany willing to act? I just don't understand it.

In every way—in every way—Putin poses a larger threat to Germany than he does to the United States. That is saying a lot because Putin poses a threat to the United States. But he is a much larger threat to our friends in Germany. Yet the United States of America, the people of this country, have outspent Germany sevenfold in helping our friends in Ukraine. It is not right.

Mr. President, you and I both know that what you do—not what you say, what you do—is what you believe, and everything else is just cottage cheese.

Talk is cheap, and, in this case, it is literally cheaper than funding the Bundeswehr. But Germany's natural gas was also cheap, and that didn't end very well.

If Germany wants to be a leader in Europe—and, gosh, I hope they do—it needs to lead. That starts with footing the bill for its own defense—we are willing to share that burden, but the American people can't do it alone—and it starts with helping Ukraine.

We have wasted a year. It is long past time for our friends in Germany to step up and meet the defense promises it made when Putin invaded.

I end as I began: Germany and America are dear, dear friends, and friends tell friends the truth.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wisconsin.

WOMEN'S HEALTH PROTECTION ACT

Ms. BALDWIN. Madam President, across the country, people are experiencing the ramifications and women are feeling the pain of *Roe v. Wade* being overturned and having lost fundamental rights and freedoms overnight.

In my home State of Wisconsin, women are living with dire, real-life consequences. Two constituents, Erica and Scott, have been trying to get pregnant for years—something many Americans can relate to—and, finally, they were successful.

But 13 weeks into her pregnancy, Erica learned the heartbreaking news that the fetus had a rare condition that caused the skull not to fully develop and the fetus could not survive—an absolute nightmare for expecting parents.

Instead of being able to get immediate care and mourn their loss, Erica and Scott had to figure out the logistics of how to get the healthcare they needed—an abortion—out of State. Let me say that again. Expecting parents learned that they lost the baby they had tried years to conceive, and instead of being able to mourn their loss, they had to navigate a complicated legal and medical landscape and play travel agent.

They had a challenge even to get somebody on the phone and struggled to find an appointment sooner than 2 to 3 weeks out. In the end, Erica was forced to stay pregnant for a week with a fetus that she knew could not survive.

She said:

Every day I was still pregnant was just an ongoing reminder of our loss.

Sadly, Erica is not alone. One Wisconsin woman bled for more than 10 days from an incomplete miscarriage after emergency room staff said they would not treat her. Another, whose water broke at 17 weeks, was sent home without the abortion care she needed, only to return 2 days later with a life-threatening infection.

All of this is because Wisconsinites have really been sent back to the year 1849. What do I mean by that? In 1849, Wisconsin's 1-year-old legislature banned abortion, making it a felony to provide abortion care in almost all circumstances. At the time of the vote, exactly zero women were present to debate that misguided law, let alone vote for or against it. In fact, it would be 70 years before women even had the right to vote.

Yet, 174 years later, an activist Supreme Court ripped away the constitutional rights of millions of Americans, and, last year, this abortion ban in Wisconsin that predates the Civil War went back into effect, denying hundreds of thousands of Wisconsinites the right and freedom to control their bodies.

This archaic law has doctors and medical professionals afraid to administer the lifesaving care they are trained to provide for fear that they might be prosecuted. In fact, lawyers are now deciding what care can and cannot be provided. This law is leaving women with no good options and wondering how, in 2023, they could have found themselves in a position with fewer rights than their mothers and their grandmothers.

Women who have the means and the ability can seek care out of State, sometimes traveling hundreds of miles and often being forced to take off time from work. Some others are being forced to self-administer medication abortions without medical supervision. Those who cannot afford the cost of travel and lodging, childcare, or time off work—a reality for so many Americans, especially women of color and those in rural areas—are being forced to carry pregnancies that they did not choose.

Wisconsinites are not alone, unfortunately. Across the country, 14 other States have already implemented near total bans on abortion, leaving one in three American women without access to a safe and legal abortion.

And anti-choice extremists in States across the country are continuing their crusade. They are continuing to try to take away bodily autonomy by pushing bills that include medically unnecessary restrictions that limit access to abortion care. This all flies in the face of an overwhelming majority of Americans who support women having control over their own bodies and their futures and their families.

That is why I, alongside a record number of my colleagues, am proud to be leading the introduction of the Women's Health Protection Act. This legislation would protect the right to perform and access abortion care, free from arbitrary waiting periods, biased and scientifically inaccurate counseling requirements, mandatory ultrasounds, and absolute bans on abortion earlier in pregnancy.

Our legislation makes sure that the life and health of the mother are paramount, just as it was prior to *Roe* being struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court and as the American people overwhelmingly support.

The Women's Health Protection Act would return the life-altering decision to have a baby to women and their doctors, without interference from politicians.

For Wisconsinites like Erica, whose rights and freedoms have been stripped away, this bill is not just a political exercise; it is a necessary response to a very real crisis.

Having the freedom to control your healthcare, your body, and your future, free from government interference, is a fundamental right, but in Wisconsin, it is no longer a reality. It is time to pass the Women's Health Protection Act.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. CORTEZ MASTO). The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Madam President, I rise today, on International Women's Day, in support of the Women's Health Protection Act. I would like to thank Senator BALDWIN for her leadership, from my neighboring State of Wisconsin; Senator BLUMENTHAL for his longtime leadership of this bill; as well as Senator MURRAY and so many others, including yourself, Madam President, for your work on this. I also wanted to mention Erin Chapman, of our Judiciary team, who is here with me, who has worked on this as well, and my colleague TINA SMITH, who is the only Senator to have worked at Planned Parenthood in the U.S. Senate.

Last year, the Supreme Court issued a ruling shredding nearly five decades of precedent protecting a woman's right to make her own healthcare decisions, against the wishes of 70 to 80 percent of Americans who believe this is a decision that should be made between a woman, her family, and her doctor.

In this past year, we heard that majority loud and clear in States where access to reproductive healthcare was directly on the ballot. From Montana and Michigan to Kentucky and Kansas, voters turned out to protect a woman's right to choose. It was almost as if those who authored some of these resolutions—like in Kansas—that tried to limit a woman's right forgot that women were going to show up and vote; and in Kansas they did, in record numbers, right in the middle of the prairie.

This doesn't come down to red States or blue States or purple States. As you know, this is about freedom. As voters across the country have made clear, it is unacceptable for women to be left to the mercy of a patchwork of State laws governing their ability to access reproductive care, leaving them, as Senator BALDWIN just pointed out, with fewer rights than their moms and grandmas. That is right; my daughter has fewer rights right now than her mom and her grandma did.

And you think about what has been happening. You think about the heart-breaking story of that 10-year-old girl in Ohio who had to go to Indiana after being a victim of rape and had to go to Indiana just to get her healthcare. I remember when that story came out. People, including news organizations—some of them said it was a hoax, and then they had to go back. They had to go back and apologize to that little girl because it wasn't a hoax. It really happened. And those are the stories we are, sadly, seeing across the country.

So what can we do in the face of this threat to women's health and freedom? All three branches of government have a responsibility to protect people's rights. And if one branch doesn't do its job, then the other branch is supposed to step in. That is why we are introducing this bill. Congress must act to codify the principles of *Roe v. Wade*

into law, and we have the opportunity and the obligation to do that with the Women's Health Protection Act.

We have updated this bill to make clear Congress's intent to restore the rights the Supreme Court took away in the Dobbs decision. The bill also protects a woman's right to travel to another State to receive reproductive healthcare, something that I know you, Madam President, have been leading on during this past year.

All of this comes down to one question, and I will end with this: Who—who—should get to make these personal decisions for women: a woman herself or politicians?

I think the answer is clear. I do not think that women making these decisions want to see our Republican colleagues in the waiting room. That is why I urge every Senator to get behind the majority of Americans who support a woman's right to choose and support the Women's Health Protection Act.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. WELCH. Madam President, I rise today to express my strong support for the Women's Health Protection Act, to restore abortion access to women all across our country.

Now, I first want to address what the Court did in Dobbs, a truly astonishing and tragic decision. What the Court did is, for the first time, take away a constitutional right—in this case, a right that women had enjoyed to make their own decisions about reproductive choice, something that the Court had enshrined in *Roe v. Wade*.

The whole history of making a more perfect Union in this country has been about expanding that we all are created equal, that we all have rights under the law that will be protected. And the Supreme Court, in the Dobbs decision, reversed that, where the Court played this destructive role of taking away the constitutional right that our women in this country have enjoyed.

The reasoning in that case, referred to by Justice Thomas, suggested that if there wasn't a right that was enumerated very specifically in the Constitution at the time it was written, then that right cannot be protected. It really implies, according to that reasoning, that interracial marriage could be struck down, that contraception should be struck down.

So the decision that the Court made in Dobbs and the reasoning in Dobbs is a real threat to the privacy rights that each and every American enjoys to make decisions about their own autonomy.

We have reacted around the country, with some States stepping up to protect abortion rights and other States enacting significant abortion restrictions. So what has happened with the Court decision in Dobbs is that we have created this immense division. For 50 years, all the women in this country had a right to make their decision and

respect the decision that another woman made. That might be to terminate a pregnancy; it might be to take that pregnancy to term. But that was an individual decision that the individual woman had to make herself, in consultation with whomever it is she chose to consult.

It created the opportunity for unity and for acceptance by respecting the individual nature of that decision and the individual right of that person affected to make that decision, not to have a decision made, as Senator KLOBUCHAR mentioned, by politicians.

Now, in Vermont, we voted across the State to constitutionally protect the right of a woman to make her own decision. So we enjoy, in Vermont, on a bipartisan basis—something that was supported by our Republican Governor as well as all our constitutional officers—we have protected the right of a woman to choose.

When I talk to Vermont women, as happy as they are that Vermont stepped up to protect their right to make their decision, they believe, as I do, that any woman's right should not be based on the ZIP Code they live in. It should be universal.

The Women's Health Protection Act makes it the right of every woman in every ZIP Code to make her own personal decision. By the way, that creates unity because it is not telling a person what decision they should make; it is accepting their right to make the decision and respecting the decision they make.

Now, women have been the leaders in this—and rightly so—because the women in this country have been most affected, but men have a very big responsibility to stand up in solidarity with our women, who have a right to protect their own bodily autonomy and to make their decision.

What we have seen with this patchwork of laws is not just confusion but peril and anxiety. It is peril and anxiety for a woman who may run afoul of that State law made by politicians. It has also created enormous uncertainty and anxiety for our providers who have to navigate whether the decision they have to make about providing a service is legal, and whatever decision they make can be challenged by some citizen seeking a bounty to hold that person to account for essentially stepping forward and providing services to a woman that they are entitled to receive.

So the Women's Health Protection Act is absolutely essential—both to protect the individual right of that woman to make her own decision, and it is also essential for us to create unity rather than division on something that is so essential, so personal, and so important.

So, along with my colleagues who are speaking on behalf of this legislation today, I urge all of our colleagues in the Senate to support this bill and protect and preserve the right of women in this country to make the decision that they deem best for them.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Ms. CANTWELL. Madam President, I join my colleagues this afternoon who come to the floor and speak about the introduction of the Women's Health Protection Act and codifying access to reproductive freedom for women in America.

It has been a little over 8 months since a radical Supreme Court overturned the 50-year-old landmark ruling guaranteeing the right to privacy and the right to obtain an abortion.

I want to take this time to highlight the impacts that this decision has had, not just on our country but even in my State, in the State of Washington.

We in Washington voted in 1991 to codify abortion as a legal right. We did that by a vote of the people. But we still need to worry about this issue because the problems that are causing the erosion of abortion rights in some parts of the United States are even causing hardship in our State.

Abortion clinics in Washington are facing rising caseloads and rising costs. Planned Parenthood in Spokane reported that in January, their clinics saw a 75-percent increase in the number of Idaho patients who were traveling across the line to get abortions. Physicians are rightly concerned that they could be arrested or sued for providing reproductive care to patients from abortion-restrictive States.

Pregnant women have it worst of all. If they go to a reproductive clinic for whatever reason, they can face a gauntlet of protesters. Yes, there are protesters right outside the Planned Parenthood clinic in Spokane. They are trying to set up fake clinics with fake names to divert women into their facilities instead of the actual care that they need.

I will note that it wasn't that long ago—just a few years ago—that the Planned Parenthood clinic was bombed in Whitman County, just south of Spokane. So these issues are a problem.

We even have had healthcare officials tell us that Washingtonians trying to get access to the morning-after pill had to go to four different pharmacies, only to find that it was not available. This drug has been an FDA-approved drug for decades, but all of a sudden, in Washington, it is not available.

Since this ruling was released last summer, 24 States have enacted near-total bans or stringent restrictions on the ability to get an abortion. People are still getting pregnant, and they are coming to Washington to exercise that opportunity, and we want to make sure we have a healthcare system that can deliver.

You know, employers are starting to avoid these abortion-restrictive States. I don't know if someone has thought through this issue. But I recently spoke to the cofounder of a very successful aviation company that just had one of the best demonstrations of the future of aviation. They are building a

new facility, and he told me point blank he won't even consider locating in a State that doesn't provide reproductive freedom. He said he couldn't imagine having to ask an employee, who was enjoying that right in the State they live in now, to transfer to a State where that freedom was lost. He said it is absurd.

We know that people are aggressively trying to restrict access to abortion. They are aggressively pursuing even more anti-choice policies, such as restricting the use of the FDA-approved abortion drug even though 5.6 million patients in the United States have used that drug successfully since the year 2000.

It is plain to see that they are not going to stop, and that is why we are introducing this legislation and continuing the fight and awareness for reproductive health for women in the United States of America. We must put an end to these practices by passing the Women's Health Protection Act, which would make this a decision left up to women and their families and allow the future to be decided by them and not the interference of our government.

Madam President, I know you know—because you have been a law enforcement officer in the State you represent—you know the challenges of having individuals' privacies protected. This now is up to us to make sure we are protecting these rights and protecting women's access to reproductive freedom.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Madam President, I am pleased to be on the floor today with my colleagues expressing my strong support for protecting women's access to basic healthcare and reproductive rights.

Since the Supreme Court's decision in *Dobbs*, we have seen our worst fears realized. A wave of abortion bans have been passed by Republican State legislatures and signed by Republican Governors. These bans put at risk, as we have heard so eloquently from those who have spoken, the health of women across this country.

We have to look no further than my home State of New Hampshire, where our Republican Governor has ensured that women are banned from accessing an abortion after 24 weeks. Our doctors face jail time for helping women access an abortion. Our family planning providers can't make ends meet because elected officials continually block access to Federal and State funding that is vital to ensuring that vulnerable populations have access to care. That care includes basic reproductive education, breast cancer screenings, and sexually transmitted disease treatment—all of which are at risk because those family planning clinics are in financial difficulty because the Republican legislature and the Republican Governor continue to deny them funding.

Just today, Republican representatives in New Hampshire's State Legislature are considering new abortion bans—bans that are so early that most women don't even know they are pregnant. These bans don't include exceptions even for rape or incest.

The Women's Health Protection Act ensures that a woman's access to care is not unnecessarily restricted by where she lives. I want to thank Senators BALDWIN and BLUMENTHAL, Senator MURRAY, and so many others who have been such strong supporters over the years for their leadership in drafting this legislation.

I know you know, Madam President, and certainly all women know that one of the most important personal decisions a woman faces in her lifetime is if and when to start a family. That decision should be made by a woman with her family, with her medical provider, and with whomever else she wants to include in that decision, but it should not be made for her by her State representative, by her Governor, by a Member of Congress, by her President, and certainly not by any unelected jurist. That decision belongs to a woman and a woman alone. It is time for us to restore that right to women all across this country.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Madam President, I am proud but I am also saddened and angry to be here introducing a measure that should never be necessary in the United States of America.

The Women's Health Protection Act will, yes, offer protection to women who need and deserve it, but it is only because of a hideously misguided decision of the U.S. Supreme Court that we are here today.

When I first introduced this measure 10 years ago, the thought of overruling *Roe v. Wade* was unimaginable. It was a figment of fear dismissed by realistic scholars and advocates. It was unthinkable. And here we are.

The U.S. Supreme Court has handed down a death sentence to women across America. It has overturned 50 years of precedent, which I know well because I was a law clerk to the U.S. Supreme Court Justice who wrote that opinion in the year afterward.

We thought then—and so did most people in America—we have dealt with this issue, we have disposed of it, and it is done in terms of jurisprudence. But this measure is now necessary to protect the rights of all people to seek the healthcare they need and deserve.

I will tell you why I believe this measure should be passed. I trust women. I trust women to make decisions about their own future. I trust women more than I do elected officials or judges or government bureaucrats to decide what is right for them individually.

This measure is necessary to stop all of the bans, prohibitions, and medically unnecessary restrictions that

have no purpose except to cut off care and stigmatize women seeking healthcare services and the dedicated healthcare providers who serve them.

Now, I have a message to the men of America. This fight is yours, too. This isn't a women's issue. This is an American issue. It is a family issue. And if you think you are spared the conscience and conviction that should require you to stand up and speak out, you are wrong. This issue is yours, too.

We have seen horror stories just in the month since Dobbs. You heard one from my colleague Senator BALDWIN. I have a similar one—Amanda Zurawski in Texas, who sadly learned that her baby would not survive, but doctors would not treat her as she might have done in other States. They told her to go home. She almost died of sepsis. They brought her back to the hospital and rushed her to intensive care.

Her husband Josh learned that, as a result, they might never have children. He said:

Amanda almost died. That's not pro-life. Amanda will have challenges having more kids. That is not pro-life. He called it "barbaric." That is the Texas law—barbaric, inhuman.

Protecting access to abortion through the Women's Health Protection Act would not only help people like Amanda—women—it would help families. It would help countless people who simply choose access to abortion care because it is right for them and for their families, for other children who are already part of those families. A woman simply should not be forced to carry a pregnancy to term because some government bureaucrat decides she should.

There is a kind of dirty little secret here, and that is that Black, Latina, indigenous, and other people of color have always faced inexcusable inequities in healthcare access and outcomes due to longstanding systemic discrimination and racism and oppression. The result of it is the practical effect of these abortion restrictions and needless requirements fall disproportionately on them and communities of color.

This point is so important because it goes to the heart of the Women's Health Protection Act. At its core, this bill is about justice. It is about reproductive justice. It was a term that was conceptualized in 1994 by a group of Black women who rightfully saw a national need to highlight and focus on women, families, and communities. Abortion bans and restrictions continue to force women in communities of color who don't wish to carry and deny them the care they need and deserve in moments when their healthcare is at risk.

This bill is critical for communities that are disproportionately harmed by the bans and medically unnecessary restrictions that the Women's Health Protection Act would prohibit. It supports those who face the greatest barriers to care.

I want to, finally, thank in this fight some of the healthcare providers, advocates, lawyers, and staff who have been on the frontline in these past 10 years—people like Jackie Blank, Sara Outtersen, and Liz Wagner of the Center for Reproductive Rights; Monica Edwards at URGE; Dr. Jamila Perritt at Physicians for Reproductive Choice; Amy Williams Navarro at NARAL; Karen Stone and Nina Serrienne at Planned Parenthood; Leila Abolfazli at the National Women's Law Center; and so many across the country, including, in Connecticut, Amanda Skinner and Gretchen Raffa at Planned Parenthood, and Liz Gustafson at NARAL Pro-Choice Connecticut.

Make no mistake, this fight will continue. The Women's Health Protection Act will pass. It may not be in the next couple of weeks or couple of months—maybe not even in this session—but it will pass because the conscience of America demands it. That is why referenda have won across the country on this issue. That is why voters went to the polls and showed with their feet where they stand. And that is why we need to fight rulings from the courts, with hard-right Republican judges who have declared a war on women.

As soon as next week, a judge in Texas may rule that mifepristone, the most common form of abortion care in this country, is illegal despite 20 years of safe, effective use with approval of the FDA of that drug. A nationwide ban will affect women in Connecticut if he does it.

We have seen also that Walgreens will not sell or make available mifepristone in 21 States whose State attorneys general have threatened to sue Walgreens if it makes that drug available. They have succumbed to bullying. They said to those attorneys general: OK, women lose; you win.

I urge consumers to vote with their feet and do their business elsewhere and show where they stand.

I am proud to be here with my colleagues to continue this fight for the Women's Health Protection Act.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, first, I want to thank Senators Murray, Baldwin, Blumenthal, and so many of the others who have spoken on this issue. It is so vital to our country, to the women of our country, and to all of us in this country.

For nearly 50 years, *Roe v. Wade* safeguarded Americans' fundamental right to choose. From the moment *Roe* was decided in 1973, the most extreme elements of the Republican Party made it their mission to reverse *Roe* and eliminate the freedom of choice.

Last summer, tragically, that doomsday scenario became true when the MAGA Supreme Court overturned *Roe* and declared that there was no constitutional right to access abortion. Eight months later, the consequences of the Court's decision have been severe. One in three women has lost abor-

tion access, and over 17 million individuals can no longer access the full range of reproductive care.

The MAGA Supreme Court's decision means our children will grow up in a world where they have fewer liberties than previous generations.

Today, as I mentioned, Senators Baldwin and Blumenthal, along with many others of us, are reintroducing a salve to this terrible injustice: the Women's Health Protection Act.

This legislation only dropped this morning, but Senate Democrats already have a record number of cosponsors, 49 in total. Let me say that again. The legislation only dropped this morning, but Senate Democrats already have a record number of cosponsors, 49 in total. This is the most united Senate Democrats have ever been on pro-choice legislation, while Republicans remain hell-bent on eliminating women's choice.

After Americans rejected MAGA Republicans' anti-choice agenda last fall, you would think they would have gotten the message, but they have not. Today, 14 States have enacted near-total abortion bans. Florida Republicans, meanwhile, introduced a bill this week to ban abortions after just 6 weeks, before many women even know they are pregnant.

How can you say the Florida bill is anything but cruel and inhumane?

And for those who think Republicans' abortion hostility is about States' rights, nearly every Republican in the Senate sponsored and voted in favor of a nationwide abortion ban. That is what this is all about. Republicans, deep down, want to ban abortions for everyone, everywhere.

As bad as all this is, the worst injustice is that those who suffer most are often low-income Americans, rural Americans, people of color, LGBTQ Americans, particularly the trans community, and especially Black Americans. In fact, research shows that States with the harshest abortion bans have some of the highest rates of Black maternal death, as much as 38 percent higher in States with abortion restrictions. There is only one word to describe this: shameful. It is a stain, a blot, a blemish on America's soil.

So passing the Women's Health Protection Act is the right thing to do for our country.

I want to thank all of the Senators who helped lead this bill—the women Members of our leadership and all of our women Senators and so many others, including Senator BLUMENTHAL, Senator WHITEHOUSE, and many more who worked so hard on this legislation. I will work with them to push this bill forward.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, I am delighted to follow Leader SCHUMER, for whom this has been such an important issue. I am confident that we will gather our caucus together to be as effective as we can.

Today is International Women's Day, but this year it is shadowed by the freedom that women have lost in America to make their own choices and to shape their own lives. A radical Supreme Court captured by deep-pocketed special interests has shredded this constitutional right. It is a whole separate story how that happened, how big dark money interests went into back rooms at the Federalist Society, hand-picked Supreme Court Justices, put them on the Court, spent millions and millions of dollars orchestrating all of that and putting TV ads on behind them—all run through phony front groups—and now instruct them what to do through a whole bunch of other phony front groups, also dark money funded, that go in as amici curiae and present these arguments in orchestrated flotillas to the Court—a separate issue but a very unfortunate situation behind this horrible decision.

What I want to talk about is how hurtful and harmful this is when things go wrong. Everybody hopes and prays that their pregnancy will be successful and there will be a healthy birth. But it is not uncommon in a pregnancy for things to go wrong. And when things go wrong, these extreme abortion restrictions put the doctors and the patient into impossible and wrong situations.

We hear about doctors who have postponed care until a patient's health or pregnancy complication had deteriorated so much that their life was in actual immediate danger.

You could have predicted it. You could have taken the prudent course, but the shadow of these criminal penalties—this assault on women's freedom—has made doctors postpone that decision, and it does, in fact, put patients' lives at risk.

There are committees that have been set up to determine whether a doctor making a decision about a woman's care should be allowed to proceed. You have to go through the hospital committee because of the risk of liability. Sometimes these things happen fast and sometimes people feel very privately about them. And the idea that this has to go to a committee is both a cause for delay and a huge lack of privacy for the women and the family involved.

So in Texas, oncologists have said they wait for pregnant women with cancer to get sicker before they treat them. Imagine being on the receiving end of that.

Some doctors have reported that they are unable to get other professionals to come and assist them with procedures because the other professionals are frightened of liability. And that, too, fouls up the ability of the patient to get care—even the forensic nurses who care for sexual assault victims.

So you are battered and you are raped, and the police respond and the EMTs respond, and they take you to the emergency room. There are forensic nurses who provide specified care

for sexual assault victims. They do the rape kit. They know how to deal with patients who are still very traumatized. And they usually also provide morning after contraception, right?

The woman has been raped. Why would you not do that?

Now, they are anxious about doing that for fear that it will be considered an abortion drug.

That woman who has been through that experience deserves far better than to have politics intrude into her care on that terrible night. It is not just me saying this. An emergency physician in Houston who was the chair of the board of the American College of Emergency Physicians said:

We're no longer basing our judgment on the clinical needs of the woman, we're basing it on what we understand the legal situation to be.

The President of the American Medical Association says:

This is happening every day, all the time in these [freedom-burdened] states.

He says that "some others have said that these are incredibly rare situations." He says: No, that is not true. "This is happening every day, all the time in these states."

I had a grim meeting with a group of OB-GYN doctors who practice in Rhode Island who are hearing from colleagues in States that have been burdened by this freedom being removed from women in those States, that their professional colleagues, fellow doctors, are beside themselves at the way this has interfered in their practice, particularly at those most dangerous time, when a pregnancy is in trouble and the woman needs the full attention of the doctor and the care that is determined based on her medical needs, not on something that some Republican legislature hobbled together.

So it is really important for us to get together and pass the Women's Health Protection Act. I want to thank all those who have shown so much leadership getting us to this day.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

Ms. HASSAN. Madam President, I rise today to join Senator BALDWIN and Senator BLUMENTHAL and all of my colleagues who are speaking in support of the Women's Health Protection Act. And I want to thank Senator WHITEHOUSE for his eloquence just now in describing the real life and death consequences of the Dobbs decision.

I want to thank advocates from Planned Parenthood, NARAL, and other organizations who have been tirelessly pushing for this legislation and standing up and speaking out for reproductive freedom. The grave threat to the health and freedom of women all across our country makes clear that it is more important than ever for Senators, regardless of political parties, to come together and support this critical legislation. Nothing less than the freedom of American women and the future of our democracy itself depends on us doing so.

For more than two centuries, each successive generation of Americans has enjoyed more freedoms than the last. By extending the promise of our democracy to all Americans, our country has only become stronger. But the Supreme Court's decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade* brought that story of progress to an abrupt halt, taking away a fundamental freedom from millions of women—a freedom that most have known for their entire lives.

Now, when women across the country raised the alarm following the Supreme Court's decision, there were those who suggested that we were overreacting. They suggested that life for most women would continue as it did before. Well, it has become very, very clear that those who espoused that view were wrong.

Since the Supreme Court's decision, legislatures across the country have passed abortion bans into law. Just last week, Wyoming's Legislature passed a new law which will ban abortion in all trimesters, in nearly all cases, and would threaten doctors who perform abortions with jail time. Other States have imposed even harsher criminal penalties. This has had a chilling effect on women's healthcare providers and countless women can no longer access reproductive care that they need.

Partisan politicians who believe women are incapable of making their own critical healthcare decisions have made clear that their ultimate goal is to ban abortion in all 50 States. In statehouses and here in Washington, these partisan politicians have demonstrated that they are not only committed to dismantling women's healthcare but that they do not believe that women have the capacity or conscience to make their own personal decisions.

Like many of you, in the last 10 months, I have heard from women at rallies, in letters, and in quiet conversations who are fearful of these attacks on reproductive freedom. The question before this Senate is whether or not we believe that we have an obligation to listen to their voices, whether or not our government should be accountable to the people, including women. What is at stake is the principle that American women are free and equal citizens in our democracy and that they should be able to chart their own futures. That is why I urge my colleagues from both sides of the aisle to join me in supporting the Women's Health Protection Act, which would once again protect a woman's fundamental freedom in every part of the country.

We can't stand idly by as women across America have become second-class citizens. We should stand united in the belief that our daughters deserve the same freedoms as everyone else.

If we want to ensure that our country remains a place where the promise of our democracy belongs to all, where our daughters are free to make their own choices and reach their fullest potential, where we remain a government

by, of, and for the people, then we must listen to American women and support the Women's Health Protection Act.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I rise with my colleagues today to continue to fight for women in every part of our country to once again be able to make their own healthcare decisions because ever since Republicans succeeded in their decades-long effort to overturn *Roe v. Wade* and drag our country back a half a century and rip away the right to abortion for women across the country, we have heard one horror story after another: women left suffering, waiting for the care that they need; doctors worried that they could face jail time for doing what is best for their patients; abortion providers who are overwhelmed by patients who are having to wait weeks for limited appointments and travel hundreds of miles for care.

Republicans have ushered in a crisis. It is a nightmare for women, for patients, and for doctors alike. And make no mistake, it is a choice extreme Republicans have made.

They fought for decades to overturn *Roe*. They passed the dangerous abortion bans that are causing this pain for women and families, and they are choosing to continue their nonstop efforts to strip women of control over their own bodies. Every day, extreme Republican politicians come out with some new awful idea to make women's lives worse.

Here in Congress, Senate Republicans introduced a national abortion ban last year. This Congress, one of the first bills the Republican House voted on was a Federal abortion ban. In just the few months since *Roe* was overturned, extreme abortion bans have gone into effect in 14 of our States, stripping over 20 million women of reproductive age of the ability to get abortion care in their own State.

And, by the way, transgender and nonbinary patients who already face so many challenges getting the healthcare they need in this country are being harmed by these bans as well. We are talking about truly cruel bans that set bounties for information about anyone who gets an abortion or helps provide one and bans that even lack exceptions for rape or incest or the life and well-being of the mom.

Republican bans have tripled the average travel time for patients to get the abortion care they need since *Roe* was overturned. And they have been especially challenging for communities that already face barriers for the care they need: patients with tight budgets who cannot afford to pay for travel and lodging hundreds of miles away from where they live; Black women who already suffer much higher maternal mortality rates; patients in rural and Tribal areas who aren't close to providers to begin with; and patients with disabilities, to just name a few.

Now they are going further, seeking to pass new bans to try to get around State court rulings and laws to get around the fact that their own constituents backed the right to abortion in statewide votes just last year. When extreme Republicans can't convince the American people to get on board with their extreme agenda, they have shown that they will try to force it on women across the country with threats and intimidation and outrageous lawsuits.

Extreme Republican attorneys general, for example, are suing the Biden administration because they told pharmacists they can't discriminate against pregnant patients and because they made it clear when a woman's life is at stake, doctors are required to provide lifesaving abortion care. And, of course, there is the extreme Republican lawsuit that seeks to take away an important abortion medication for patients nationwide—nationwide—effectively creating a nationwide ban on the most common way patients get an abortion. Twenty-two Republican attorneys general and, by the way, 67 Republicans right here in Congress have filed a brief supporting that lawsuit, supporting overriding experts at FDA to take a safe, effective abortion medication away from women nationwide, to take it away from my constituents in Washington State.

People across the country have already made it crystal clear they will not stand for Republicans' extreme agenda. In fact, last November, abortion rights won in every single place they were on the ballot—every single place they were on the ballot.

Democrats won't stand for Republican attacks either. We are committed right here to being a firewall in the Senate against the House Republicans' extreme attacks on abortion. We refuse to accept a future where our daughters and granddaughters have fewer rights than we did.

We refuse to accept that any patient's right to control their own body depends on a State that they live in or the money in their bank account. That is why today Democrats are reintroducing the Women's Health Protection Act because the Dobbs decision was not the beginning of this fight, and it was not the end—far from it. We have to restore *Roe* for women in every corner of our country, and that is exactly what this bill does. It follows the Constitution and nearly half a century of precedent and gives patients the right to get an abortion and doctors the right to provide that care no matter where they are in America.

Some Republicans want us to just get used to women being forced to stay pregnant, no matter their circumstance, no matter what it means for their health or their family or their hope for the future. Some Republicans are hoping that this will all become normal.

Well, I have got news for them. Never, never will that happen. We will

not be quiet. We will not give up. We are going to keep coming back as many times as it takes to end this chaos and return control of women's bodies to women. I promise, every single time we have to come back to this floor to lay bare the horrors of these extreme abortion bans they are inflicting on women and patients in this country, we will get louder.

So I urge all my Republican colleagues, start listening to the American people, start acknowledging the pain that these abortion bans are causing. Let's pass this critical bill to make things right.

I can't say that I expect them to listen to us, but I can guarantee you, if they don't, we will be back.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Madam President, I rise in strong support of the Women's Health Protection Act.

This legislation needs to be a centerpiece in the battle to defend privacy rights in America. This is the third week I have stood on the Senate floor to talk about this extraordinary assault on privacy and bodily independence that is taking place in America, and it started, of course, with the horrendous Dobbs decision.

When that decision came down, Republicans all over America said that this was going to be a matter of State's rights. They weren't telling the truth to the American people.

Shortly after the decision, there was a full-court press by Republicans at the local level, State level, and, yes, the national level to claw back the rights of women and deny access to reproductive care. Months after the Dobbs decision, a bill to enact a 6-week abortion ban, to ban abortion before most women even know they are pregnant, was introduced in this body.

That was a national ban—every single State—every single State. So much for State's rights.

Anti-abortion activists are not only working Senate Republicans, they are working the court system as well. I call it court washing. It goes way beyond the issue—and I know we have got an expert lawyer in the Chair. It goes way beyond so-called judge shopping that everybody has heard about in the past. It is not simply a matter of looking at a judge's long record of soundly reasoned opinions and hoping for an outcome.

Republicans—particularly talking about this Texas case, this one in Amarillo, TX. Republicans picked him because he was a lifelong rightwing activist who was planted in a district court to deliver the decision they wanted, the verdict that they have been scheming to deliver. We are talking about banning mifepristone nationwide, a drug approved by the Food and Drug Administration. This is something I care about deeply because I held the first congressional hearing on the role of the FDA, particularly with

mifepristone. It has been safe and effective, and it has been the law of the land for years and years. If you throw that out, you take away women's independence, and the government puts itself front and center in the exam room and in the private decisions about whether and when to start a family.

As women grapple with restrictive State laws that take away their right to privacy and threaten their health, they are also facing a crisis of digital privacy and—what I call—the threat of uterus surveillance.

We have long been concerned about location data leaching from phone apps and how ripe for abuse it is. In States where extremists have restricted or banned abortion, the whole issue of women having their personal data weaponized against them is now front and center. Shady data brokers have already tracked women to and from Planned Parenthood health centers and have sold their information, basically, to anybody who has got a credit card. In States where abortion is illegal, anything women say or read online can be used against them. Researching birth control online, updating a period tracking app, or even carrying a phone into a doctor's office may become weaponized against you. It could be evidence for the prosecution—the most personal and private data about women's bodies and their health. Just imagine how much worse it could get if more States pass draconian laws or Republicans get their nationwide ban.

That is why we are here to pass this legislation: to ensure that every woman in every State is in a position to make private medical decisions, where that woman is in the driver's seat with respect to her privacy and her independence. To do otherwise is going to keep healthcare providers from doing their jobs. To do otherwise is going to mean more delaying care for women and more bullying pharmacies out of providing medications that are completely legal and FDA-approved.

These providers ought to be able to do their jobs based on science. That is what the FDA decision was all about. It wasn't a political decision. It wasn't made here on the floor of the U.S. Senate and having people go back and forth about their opinions. It was an FDA decision based on science. These policies are common sense, and they are popular.

I am going to close with just a couple of quick points.

Once women lose the ability to make private healthcare choices about their reproductive healthcare, I think we ought to make sure everybody understands that there will be women who will die.

I think we need to understand that what this is about is whether freedom is going to mean the same thing for women as it does for men. Women do not have the same privacy rights right now. They don't have the same free-

dom. If women are subjected to uterus surveillance, they don't have true freedom. If Republican politicians dictate what goes on in an exam room, they don't have true freedom. If women can't control their own bodies and make their own decisions about when and whether to get pregnant, they don't have true freedom. If women are forced to give birth—and in some cases, Republicans want to force women to give birth even after cases of rape and incest—those women do not have true freedom.

So if there is one word—one word—that this debate is all about for women as to what is at stake, that one word is "freedom," and our legislation ensures they will have it. I urge colleagues to support it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. OSSOFF). The Senator from Hawaii.

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. President, I rise today, on International Women's Day, to urge my Republican colleagues to join us in protecting our individual rights and freedoms and to support the Women's Health Protection Act.

You have heard from a lot of us on the floor today, and we are going to repeat certain things, but these are things that bear repeating because this issue of abortion is all about who gets to decide. Is it the individual or a bunch of politicians? You can see where I am coming from. When the rightwing, ideologically driven Supreme Court overturned nearly 50 years of precedent of abolishing an individual's right to get an abortion, that was just the beginning. The Dobbs decision opened the doors for extremist Republicans who have made clear they will stop at nothing to control our bodies.

It hasn't even been a year since the Supreme Court upheld our right to bodily autonomy, and, already, abortion is entirely banned in 12 States, meaning more than 20 percent of the U.S. population lives in States where abortion is illegal. There are 21 States that have enacted 36 bills to restrict or ban abortion; and in 12 States, constitutional amendments have been proposed to limit abortion access. Just this week, Florida Republicans filed a 6-week abortion ban—6 weeks—which is before many women are even aware they are pregnant.

After the Dobbs decision, the Republicans claimed abortion would be dealt with in the States as States' rights. This is what we in Hawaii would call a shibai argument. Clearly, abortion has never been about States' rights. So their unrelenting efforts to limit bodily autonomy is about taking away the very individual rights and freedoms that Republicans claim to care so much about.

Beyond State legislatures, Republicans in the Senate have introduced a nationwide abortion ban. Any day now, we are waiting for one extremist, Trump-appointed Federal judge in Texas to decide whether to institute a nationwide ban on mifepristone, which

is the safe and effective medication that Americans have relied on for more than 20 years—for more than two decades—and that accounts for more than half of the abortions in our country.

Regardless of this decision in Texas, after threats from GOP Attorneys General from 20—20—conservative States, Walgreens stated they would no longer dispense medication abortion pills in numerous States, including in States where medical abortion remains legal, although they now appear to be walking that back after provoking a public outcry. What is next—banning contraception? There are even Republican State lawmakers who are introducing bills to allow the death penalty—the death penalty—for women who have abortions.

There is no end to what extremist Republicans will do to control our bodies. Whether you live in States like Hawaii, California, or New York, or in States where Republican legislatures have already passed laws, our freedom is at risk. Our bodily autonomy is at risk. For pregnant people across the country, that means their health, and even their lives, are at stake.

Pregnancies carry many risks, and the United States already has the highest maternal mortality rate of any developed country. It is unbelievable that a country like the United States has the highest maternal mortality rate in the world. These risks are even greater for women of color, women with disabilities, and transgender and gender nonconforming individuals. People will die without access to safe, legal abortions. A recent study found, if Republicans institute a nationwide abortion ban, maternal deaths will rise by 24 percent across the country.

So, today, I urge my colleagues to stop pandering to the political extremism in our country and join us in passing the Women's Health Protection Act to codify the right to an abortion in Federal law and protect all people across the country.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I am really proud to join today with my colleagues to speak on behalf of American women of the fundamental rights of all pregnant persons and our freedom to make our own healthcare decisions.

Thanks to a radically conservative Supreme Court, reproductive freedom is no longer a constitutional right in the United States for any American. Roe v. Wade protected our freedoms for 50 years, until it didn't, and now today's young women have fewer freedoms than their mothers and their grandmothers ever did. And we are furious. Do you want to know how furious?

In Michigan, we turned our anger into action. In November, we had the largest voter turnout for a midterm election ever. One of the measures on the ballot enshrined the right to reproductive freedom in our State's constitution. It passed by a strong 13-point

margin, because Michiganders understand that health decisions should be made by individual people, not by judges and not by politicians.

Unfortunately, a lot of folks didn't get the message. Republicans in Congress have pushed for a nationwide abortion ban. State legislatures across the country are making it harder and harder for people in their States to receive reproductive care. There are 24 States that have already banned abortion or probably will soon, and any day now, a Federal judge—one man in Texas—let me repeat that. One man in Texas is expected to hand down a ruling that could ban a medication that has been used to safely end pregnancies for 23 years. That decision would prevent patients from getting the healthcare they need even in States where abortion is legal.

That is why it is so incredibly important that we pass a law that says, once and for all, that women in America have the freedom to make our own healthcare decisions. That is just what the Women's Health Protection Act will do, and I am very proud to join my colleagues in introducing this bill.

It will protect all Americans from State laws that limit access to abortion services. Right now, your freedom to make your own healthcare decisions depends on the ZIP code you happen to live in, and that is simply wrong. Women in Michigan and Mississippi and Montana all deserve to make decisions about our own healthcare, our own lives—not extreme Republican lawmakers, not extreme members of the Supreme Court, not one extreme judge in Texas. It is critical that we pass the Women's Health Protection Act now. Our freedom depends on it.

Let's be clear. We will continue to fight until our reproductive freedom as Americans is restored.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Mr. President, I have had the opportunity now to listen to all of my colleagues as they rightfully come to the floor here to, really, talk about the erosion of women's rights in this country by the far-right extreme.

I have to thank Senators BALDWIN and BLUMENTHAL and so many of my colleagues—Senator MURRAY and so many—who have been on the forefront of protecting women's rights and freedoms.

Let's not mistake this. This is about women's freedom. That is what this is about. It has been less than a year since the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*, and it has been a dark time for women in America since then, because, by dismissing 50 years of precedent that protected women's freedom, the Supreme Court emboldened far-right Republicans to go after women's rights in increasingly extreme ways. One of the first things some of these Republican leaders did in Congress after the *Dobbs* decision was to

work on legislation to ban abortion nationwide. Until they can pass that legislation denying States their ability to keep abortion legal, they will continue their attacks on reproductive freedoms and make it as difficult as possible for women to access essential reproductive healthcare.

In Texas, Arizona, Wisconsin, and other States with strict abortion bans, doctors who provide women with reproductive care could be prosecuted, heavily fined, or imprisoned—and in some cases, all three. These States have threatened to revoke providers' medical licenses, putting their politics over what is best for patient health.

For women, confusion and fear over abortion bans have led to denied access to necessary and potentially lifesaving reproductive care. Imagine the distress, the burden these women and their families carry. Pregnancy decisions are deeply personal. It is not a legal debate up for discussion in the courts.

We must do everything we can to ensure that women have the tools they need so they can decide what is best for their lives, for their health, and for their families.

Since the Court overturned *Roe*, women have begun traveling, as you have heard today, to pro-choice States like Nevada for the abortion care they need, but that is not enough because anti-choice policymakers are working on ways to take that freedom away. States' rights aren't enough.

Their latest attack on women's rights is through a lawsuit to restrict nationwide access to the abortion pill, even for women in States where medication abortion is one of the few legal options left.

Extremist Republicans' war on reproductive freedom didn't stop with overturning *Roe*, it didn't stop with punishing doctors, and it won't stop with going after medication abortion.

Let's get one thing clear: For the far right, this is about controlling women.

I trust women, and so do a majority of Americans, including Nevadans. Nearly two-thirds of Americans believe women should have the right to make their own choices about their reproductive care, and I stand with them. That is why I am proud to join my colleagues today to reintroduce the Women's Health Protection Act.

As you have heard, this bill defends women against the extreme politicians who are working to strip away those rights, guaranteeing that women can seek the vital reproductive care they need without having to answer to the government.

Under this bill, women would see an end to abortion bans and burdensome restrictions to accessing abortion. Women would be able to get the healthcare they need without being subjected to medically unnecessary ultrasounds, excessive waiting periods, and other obstacles that far-right politicians have put in their path. Women and their families would be able to plan for their futures on their own terms.

The alternative is to watch a minority of extremists continue to strip away women's rights across the country. We must protect a woman's right to choose and pass the Women's Health Protection Act.

I will say one final thing, and I would hope my colleagues on the other side would listen to this. We have heard conversations about the impact that this issue has had on this past election cycle. I am proof. I am back here because not just Democrats but Republicans and Independents, nonpartisans in my State, care about this issue. They care about the rights of women and their freedom to make this decision, and a majority of Americans do as well.

That is why it is important for all of my colleagues—I don't care what aisle you sit in; I don't care what party you are—or you are not a party; the goal here is, when we come to this Congress, when we stand here together and we try to solve the problems that matter to this country, we are listening to the American people, and we are not letting a minority determine, and we are not about taking away the freedoms and rights of people in this country, including women, and turning them into second-class citizens. That is not who we are.

I invite my colleagues at all times—I don't care where you are, what party you stand with, where you are—to stand with women in this country. This is such an important issue. Pay attention to the American public and what is at stake here. I ask you to support us with the Women's Health Protection Act.

I yield the floor.

H.J. RES. 26

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, the joint resolution we are considering tramples on the right of DC citizens to manage their own affairs, plain and simple. In fact, it is so intrusive, it provides a compelling argument for DC statehood.

DC statehood is long overdue. There is no justification for the denial of rights and representation for the 700,000 citizens of the District of Columbia. They deserve to have their voices heard in our democracy; they deserve true self-governance and the right to have a say in the policies that will affect their lives.

Our Nation's Capital is home to more than 700,000 fellow Americans who, despite our Nation's founding mantra—"no taxation without representation"—pay their share of taxes without full voting representation in either Chamber of Congress. In fact, despite paying more in Federal taxes per capita than citizens of any of the 50 States, DC residents have no say in how those taxes are actually spent.

This isn't a Republican or Democratic issue; it is an American issue because the lack of fair representation for DC residents is clearly inconsistent with the values on which this country was founded. It is therefore incumbent upon all of us who enjoy the right and

the privilege of full voting rights and representation to take up the cause of our fellow citizens in the District of Columbia.

We must use our voices to call out this historic injustice and right this wrong.

DC has more residents than two States, Wyoming and Vermont. It has a population comparable to Alaska and Delaware. DC pays more in Federal taxes than 23 States. Yet it has no representation here in the Senate. Along with my colleagues who make up the informal "National Capital Area" delegation, I have worked over the years to advance the District's interests given its proximity to the two States and significant cross-border commuting and business activity.

Statehood for DC is not about taking away the power and representation of residents of other States. This is not and should never be interpreted as a zero-sum game. Instead, what we have here is a situation that clearly conflicts with our democratic ideals.

The District includes people of all backgrounds. However unique the District might be, its residents are hard-working people who do not differ from other Americans in their basic entitlement to representation. Taxation without representation is a compelling argument for statehood. It should be enough to move Congress to act. Instead, we are regressing here.

Rubbing salt into the wound of this intrusion is the fact that proponents of the joint resolution deliberately mischaracterize what the Criminal Code revision does, or fails to do. The Revised Criminal Code Act of 2022—the RCCA—comprehensively revises DC's Criminal Code, which had not been updated since its creation in 1901. We may agree or disagree with some of its provisions, but it is a matter that should be left to the elected officials of the District.

Congress has passed joint resolutions disapproving DC legislation on three occasions; the last time occurred in 1991. A resolution of disapproval has not received a floor vote in either Chamber since 2015.

In recent years, it appears that our friends across the aisle have introduced joint resolutions of disapproval to undermine DC self-governance as a means for advancing partisan policy narratives around controversial topics such as crime, COVID-19 vaccinations, reproductive health, and harm reduction programs such as needle exchange.

Although DC Mayor Muriel Bowser vetoed the council's Criminal Code revision—the Council voted 12-1 to override the veto—she also indicated her staunch opposition to Congress intervening in the city's affairs. I agree with Mayor Bowser.

The District's Attorney General, Brian L. Schwalb, sent a letter to the Senate on February 23, 2023, in which he eloquently stated:

Ironically, many who have expressed support for overriding these two D.C. local laws

have long espoused the virtues of freedom from federal government interference and respect for states' rights . . . I am well aware of the Constitutional power granted to Congress in Article I, Section 8, Clause 17. However, merely because Congress has the power to act does not mean that it should exercise that power. Particularly given Congress' stated intent when passing the Home Rule Act to empower the District "to the greatest extent possible" with the responsibility of "legislating upon essentially local District matters," I urge the Senate to reject calls for disapproval of D.C. local laws, and instead, to stand up for democratic values, stand against disenfranchisement, and stand with the residents of our Nation's capital.

I agree with Attorney General Schwalb. I deeply regret that Congress is intervening in the affairs of people who have no representation, especially here in the Senate, and I urge my colleagues to defeat this misguided measure.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. HAGERTY. Mr. President, the Senate will soon take up my resolution to nullify the Revised Criminal Code Act recently passed by the DC Council—a measure that becomes more central every day as the harrowing reports of lawlessness and deadly violence in our Nation's Capital steadily accumulate.

Carjackings in DC have increased for 5 consecutive years and have more than tripled in the past 3 years. For the first time in 20 years, DC has experienced back-to-back years with more than 200 homicides. Car thefts are up 111 percent this year. It has gotten so bad that the city recently announced that it is giving away free steering-wheel locks to owners of frequently stolen cars here in the District. Instead, how about just enacting laws that stop crime in the first place?

Sadly, violent crime has become an epidemic in our Nation's Capital, where our constituents, Americans from across the country, and people from around the world come to live, come to work, and come to visit, from schoolchildren to World War II veterans. Yet, unbelievably, despite escalating crime and palpable unease from all who visit or live in DC, the DC Council recently passed legislation to reduce penalties and eliminate minimum sentences for violent criminal offenses, including carjackings, robberies, and even homicides.

DC's crime bill also dramatically expands jury trials in misdemeanor cases, which may sound good to a law school classroom but in practice will overwhelm the system and force dropped charges and crippling delays in countless criminal cases integral to preserving order and public safety. The DC crime bill reduces penalties on violent crime in the midst of a violent crime wave. It is the opposite of good policy and will make the crime wave even worse. It sends the wrong message—that DC is not serious about fighting crime.

DC's own police chief recently concluded that one of the main reasons for

rising crime in the District, especially among youth, is the perception among criminals that they will suffer no consequence. Yet the council proposes to reduce the consequences even further.

Make no mistake, this DC crime bill will deliver the wrong results. Under these soft-on-crime policies, public safety will deteriorate further.

This is common sense to most people. It should be no surprise, then, that Mayor Bowser recently vetoed the DC crime bill just this January. She said:

This bill does not make us safer.

I couldn't agree more.

Yet, putting woke ideology over public safety, the DC Council overrode the Mayor's veto. That is why I am bringing forth this resolution to block the DC crime bill.

Washington is a Federal district, and the Constitution puts Congress in charge of governing it. This makes sense. Countless Americans from all over the country visit our Nation's Capital each week to meet with their Federal representatives and to enjoy our national history. Congress has a constitutional obligation to make sure these visitors can walk down the sidewalk or enjoy a meal without fear of becoming victims.

This resolution passed with significant bipartisan support in the House of Representatives, and I am confident that an even larger bipartisan majority of this body will support it tonight. Numerous law enforcement groups, including the DC Police Union, are supportive. Polling shows that 72 percent of DC residents believe that the DC crime bill sends the wrong message.

A few weeks ago, the White House put out a statement of policy opposing my resolution—based on the President's support for DC Statehood, I presume—but last week, the President indicated he would, in fact, support my resolution. I am glad the President has recognized that Congress has a legitimate, constitutional role in reviewing and in rejecting DC's harmful legislation.

To this point, given the now-widespread recognition that this is a bad bill, imagine if Congress did not have the authority under the Constitution and the DC Home Rule Act to block DC laws. This dangerous bill would become law.

Apparently seeing the writing on the wall this week, the chairman of the DC Council cooked up a desperate and legally baseless ploy to "un-submit" the bill to Congress in an attempt to avoid a vote of disapproval. But the DC Home Rule Act is clear: There is no valid action of this nature. No matter how hard they try, the council cannot avoid accountability for passing this disastrous, dangerous, soft-on-crime bill.

Violent crime has become an epidemic in America. This resolution is a referendum on it. Do you want to decrease jail time for violent criminals? Do you want to prioritize the interests of law-abiding citizens or the interests of criminals? This will be one of the

only opportunities during this Congress for this body to send a broad message on violent crime—a message that may impact the safety and security of Americans throughout our Nation.

I appreciate that many of my colleagues have cosponsored or indicated their support for this resolution, and I urge all of my colleagues to support it tonight.

Stopping violent crime should not be a Republican or Democrat objective; it should be a commonsense one. I hope the Senate sends that message today by adopting this resolution and by sending it to the President's desk.

I yield back all time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, all time is yielded back.

The joint resolution was ordered to a third reading and was read the third time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The joint resolution having been read the third time, the question is, Shall the joint resolution pass?

Mr. HAGERTY. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Delaware (Mr. CARPER), the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN), and the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. FETTERMAN) are necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH).

The result was announced—yeas 81, nays 14, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 49 Leg.]

YEAS—81

Baldwin	Grassley	Padilla
Barrasso	Hagerty	Paul
Bennet	Hassan	Peters
Blackburn	Hawley	Ricketts
Blumenthal	Heinrich	Romney
Boozman	Hickenlooper	Rosen
Braun	Hoeven	Rounds
Britt	Hyde-Smith	Rubio
Brown	Johnson	Schatz
Budd	Kaine	Schmitt
Cantwell	Kelly	Schumer
Capito	Kennedy	Scott (FL)
Casey	King	Scott (SC)
Cassidy	Klobuchar	Shaheen
Collins	Lankford	Sinema
Coons	Lee	Smith
Cornyn	Lujan	Stabenow
Cortez Masto	Lummis	Sullivan
Cotton	Manchin	Tester
Cramer	Marshall	Thune
Crapo	McConnell	Tillis
Cruz	Menendez	Tuberville
Daines	Moran	Vance
Ernst	Mullin	Warner
Fischer	Murkowski	Wicker
Gillibrand	Murray	Wyden
Graham	Ossoff	Young

NAYS—14

Booker	Markey	Van Hollen
Cardin	Merkley	Warren
Duckworth	Murphy	Welch
Durbin	Reed	Whitehouse
Hirono	Sanders	

ANSWERED "PRESENT"—1

Warnock

NOT VOTING—4

Carper
Feinstein

Fetterman
Risch

The joint resolution (H.J. Res. 26) was passed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HASSAN). The Senator from South Dakota.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. ROUNDS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE LIBRARY RULES OF PROCEDURE

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Madam President, on March 8, 2023, the Joint Committee on the Library organized, elected a chair, a vice chair, and adopted committee rules for the 118th Congress. Members of the Joint Committee on the Library elected Senator AMY KLOBUCHAR as chair and Representative BRYAN STEIL as vice chair. Pursuant to rule XXVI, paragraph 2, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that a copy of the committee rules be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

JOINT COMMITTEE OF CONGRESS ON THE LIBRARY RULES FOR THE 118TH CONGRESS

TITLE I—MEETINGS OF THE COMMITTEE

1. Regular meetings may be called by the Chair, with the concurrence of the Vice Chair, as may be deemed necessary or pursuant to the provision of paragraph 3 of rule XXVI of the Standing Rules of the Senate.

2. Meetings of the committee, including meetings to conduct hearings, shall be open to the public, except that a meeting or series of meetings by the committee on the same subject for a period of no more than 14 calendar days may be closed to the public on a motion made and seconded to go into closed session to discuss only whether the matters enumerated in subparagraphs (A) through (F) would require the meeting to be closed followed immediately by a recorded vote in open session by a majority of the members of the committee when it is determined that the matters to be discussed or the testimony to be taken at such meeting or meetings—

(A) will disclose matters necessary to be kept secret in the interests of national defense or the confidential conduct of the foreign relations of the United States;

(B) will relate solely to matters of the committee staff personnel or internal staff management or procedures;

(C) will tend to charge an individual with crime or misconduct, to disgrace or injure the professional standing of an individual, or otherwise to expose an individual to public contempt or obloquy, or will represent a clearly unwarranted invasion of privacy of an individual;

(D) will disclose the identity of any informer or law enforcement agent or will disclose any information relating to the investigation or prosecution of a criminal offense that is required to be kept secret in the interest of effective law enforcement;

(E) will disclose information relating to the trade secrets or financial or commercial

information pertaining specifically to a given person if—

(1) an Act of Congress requires the information to be kept confidential by Government officers and employees; or

(2) the information has been obtained by the Government on a confidential basis, other than through an application by such person for a specific Government financial or other benefit, and is required to be kept secret in order to prevent undue injury to the benefit, and is required to be kept secret in order to prevent undue injury to the competitive position of such person; or

(F) may divulge matters required to be kept confidential under the provisions of law or Government regulation. (Paragraph 5(b) of rule XXVI of the Standing Rules of the Senate.)

3. Written notices of committee meetings will normally be sent by the committee's staff director to all members at least 3 days in advance. In addition, the committee staff will email or telephone reminders of committee meetings to all members of the committee or to the appropriate staff assistants in their offices.

4. A copy of the committee's intended agenda enumerating separate items of committee business will normally be sent to all members of the committee by the staff director at least 1 day in advance of all meetings. This does not preclude any member of the committee from raising appropriate non-agenda topics.

5. Any witness who is to appear before the committee in any hearing shall file with the clerk of the committee at least 3 business days before the date of his or her appearance, a written statement of his or her proposed testimony and an executive summary thereof, in such form as the Chair may direct, unless the Chair waived such a requirement for good cause.

TITLE II—QUORUMS

1. Pursuant to paragraph 7(a)(1) of rule XXVI of the Standing Rules, 4 members of the committee shall constitute a quorum.

2. Pursuant to paragraph 7(a)(2) of rule XXVI of the Standing Rules, 2 members of the committee shall constitute a quorum for the purpose of taking testimony; provided, however, once a quorum is established, any one member can continue to take such testimony.

3. Under no circumstance may proxies be considered for the establishment of a quorum.

TITLE III—VOTING

1. Voting in the committee on any issue will normally be by voice vote.

2. If a third of the members present so demand, a recorded vote will be taken on any question by roll call.

3. The results of roll call votes taken in any meeting upon a measure, or any amendment thereto, shall be stated in the committee report on that measure unless previously announced by the committee, and such report or announcement shall include a tabulation of the votes cast in favor and the votes cast in opposition to each measure and amendment by each member of the committee. (Paragraph 7(b) and (c) of rule XXVI of the Standing Rules.)

TITLE IV—DELEGATION AND AUTHORITY TO THE CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

1. The Chair and Vice Chair are authorized to sign all necessary vouchers and routine papers for which the committee's approval is required and to decide on the committee's behalf on all routine business.

2. The Chair is authorized to engage commercial reporters for the preparation of transcripts of committee meetings and hearings.

3. The Chair is authorized to issue, on behalf of the committee, regulations normally